



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 17 October 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

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ¹	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 ²	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 ⁷	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Famham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden ³	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will ⁴	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 ^{5,6}	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 ⁸	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

¹ Resigned 27 September 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ ALP until 5 August 2023

⁵ Greens until 1 November 2024

⁶ Resigned 23 November 2024

⁷ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁸ 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

CONTENTS

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Notices of motion	3955
PETITIONS	
Cobram health services	3955
DOCUMENTS	
Documents	3955
MOTIONS	
Education system.....	3956
Suburban Rail Loop	3956
Liberal Party.....	3956
Suburban Rail Loop	3956
Treaty.....	3957
Suburban Rail Loop	3957
National Party	3957
Suburban Rail Loop	3957
Jeff Kennett.....	3957
Suburban Rail Loop	3957
Leader of the Opposition	3958
Suburban Rail Loop	3958
Housing.....	3958
Suburban Rail Loop	3958
Leader of the Opposition	3958
Suburban Rail Loop	3958
Housing.....	3959
Suburban Rail Loop	3959
Leader of the Opposition	3959
Suburban Rail Loop	3959
Housing.....	3959
Suburban Rail Loop	3959
Housing.....	3960
Suburban Rail Loop	3960
Housing.....	3960
Suburban Rail Loop	3960
Cost of living.....	3962
Government performance.....	3963
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Adjournment	3963
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
Nido Early School Moonee Valley.....	3963
Marjorie Kirkbright	3963
Hilda Hadanich	3963
Beaumaris Probus Club	3963
Highett grassy woodland	3964
Werribee Football Club.....	3964
Birrarrung Park	3964
Restricted breed dogs	3964
Mykola Bychok	3964
Lauretta Hanson and Patrick French.....	3965
Patient transport	3965
Sajjad Ali and Saif Ullah	3965
St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Cathedral Parish Melbourne	3966
Robbie Heritage	3966
Les Sharp.....	3966
Zulya Kamalova	3966
Pahran Football Club	3967
Pete Steedman.....	3967
Mornington Peninsula District Scouts.....	3967
Rye Yacht Club	3968
Safety Beach Sailing Club.....	3968
Shoreham Tennis Club.....	3968
Meera Mansukhani.....	3968
Wycheproof King of the Mountain	3968
Douglas Woods and Michael Hogarth	3969

CONTENTS

Western suburbs Vietnamese community.....	3969
Pietro Cianflone.....	3969
Health funding.....	3969
Theo Zographos.....	3969
Allan Robinson.....	3970
Middle East conflict.....	3970
Community safety.....	3971
Sikh Volunteers Australia.....	3971
BILLS	
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024.....	3971
Second reading.....	3971
Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024.....	3990
Second reading.....	3990
MEMBERS	
Minister for Transport Infrastructure.....	3998
Absence.....	3998
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
State forest access.....	3998
Ministers statements: Victorian Honour Roll of Women.....	4000
Melbourne Market.....	4000
Ministers statements: rental reform.....	4002
Supermarket prices.....	4003
Ministers statements: Spring Racing Carnival.....	4004
Hospitality industry.....	4004
Ministers statements: Respectful Relationships.....	4005
Government performance.....	4006
Ministers statements: housing.....	4008
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
Polwarth electorate.....	4008
Glen Waverley electorate.....	4008
Mildura electorate.....	4009
Bass electorate.....	4009
Brighton electorate.....	4009
Narre Warren South electorate.....	4010
Prahran electorate.....	4010
Cranbourne electorate.....	4010
Warrandyte electorate.....	4010
Box Hill electorate.....	4010
RULINGS FROM THE CHAIR	
Constituency questions.....	4011
BILLS	
Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024.....	4011
Second reading.....	4011
Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024.....	4024
Council's amendments.....	4024
Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024.....	4025
Second reading.....	4025
Third reading.....	4035
Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Bill 2024.....	4036
Second reading.....	4036
Third reading.....	4036
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024.....	4036
Second reading.....	4036
Third reading.....	4037
ADJOURNMENT	
Country Fire Authority volunteer compensation scheme.....	4037
Metro Tunnel.....	4037
Glen Eira police resources.....	4038
Preston activity centre.....	4039
Multicultural community facilities.....	4039
Albert Park electorate community safety.....	4040
Solar energy.....	4040
East Bentleigh ambulance station.....	4041

CONTENTS

Fruit fly	4041
State Emergency Service Aintree unit.....	4042
Responses	4042

Thursday 17 October 2024

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:33 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, last sitting week there was some discussion in the chamber about changes to the way that members could raise outstanding matters that ministers have not responded to, and the Speaker made a statement in relation to those matters. I draw the Speaker's attention to there still being 165 outstanding matters. The coalition does not have the same opportunity to raise those concerns anymore, despite the fact that there are still 165 outstanding.

The SPEAKER: As the Manager of Opposition Business is aware, I agreed to take this matter to a Standing Orders Committee meeting, and that is where it will be discussed.

Business of the house**Notices of motion****Notices given.**

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is so disrespectful. The Leader of the Nationals raised a point of order yesterday about being respectful to members on their feet, and I expect all members to be respectful to members on their feet.

Further notices given.***Petitions*****Cobram health services**

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) presented a petition bearing 1254 signatures:

Issue:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the current lack of kidney dialysis facilities at Cobram Hospital, and the requirement for residents requiring dialysis to travel over an hour to a neighbouring town multiple times a week.

Action:

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the Minister for Health to require that the Department of Health fund and implement adequate dialysis facilities at Cobram in order to alleviate the cost to residents and reduce the extensive travel time required.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Documents**Documents****Incorporated list as follows:**

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General – Responses to Performance Engagement Recommendations: Annual Status Update 2024 – Ordered to be published

Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust – Report year ended 31 March 2024

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 – Government response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Report on the Inquiry into the 2021–22 and 2022–23 Financial and Performance Outcomes

SEC Energy Pty Ltd – Report 26 October 2023 to 30 June 2024

SEC Infrastructure Pty Ltd – Report 26 October 2023 to 30 June 2024

SEC Victoria Pty Ltd – Report 25 October 2023 to 30 June 2024

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987 – SR 111

Royal Botanic Gardens Act 1991 – SR 110

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – SR 108

Treasury Corporation of Victoria Act 1992 – SR 112

Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007 – SR 109

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 81, 106.

DOCUMENT TABLED UNDER STANDING ORDERS – The Clerk tabled:

Government response to the Environment and Planning Committee's Report on the Inquiry into employers and contractors who refuse to pay their subcontractors for completed works.

Motions

Education system

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Kalkallo, the member for Greenvale and the Minister for Planning for abandoning faith-based education by rejecting the proposal by the Assyrian Church of the East to build St Joseph's Christian College in Yuroke.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and member for Bendigo East for putting all her eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop whilst slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Howard Street, Epsom, in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Liberal Party

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That this house notes:

- (1) the member for Caulfield made secret recordings of his own Liberal Party colleagues;
- (2) the Leader of the Opposition knew about the secret recordings and failed to disclose them to his own party; and
- (3) if the Victorian Liberals cannot trust John Pesutto, neither can the Victorian people.

Leave refused.

The SPEAKER: The member for Frankston will refer to members by their correct titles.

Suburban Rail Loop

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (09:41): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Ripon for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving the St Arnaud–Wooroonook road at Dooboobetic in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Treaty

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (09:41): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for blindsiding Victoria's First People when he backflipped on treaty, proving once again that he cannot be trusted.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:42): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Point Cook for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving roads like Boardwalk Boulevard in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

National Party

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (09:42): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes the comments from the Leader of the Nationals, who said that he had given up trying to think about what the Liberals are thinking about; and
- (2) calls on the Victorian Nationals to unshackle themselves from their dysfunctional coalition partner.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:42): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million compared to 2020, leaving 91 per cent of Victoria's roads in a poor or very poor condition.

Leave refused.

Jeff Kennett

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (09:43): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes that former Premier Jeff Kennett is a key mentor and funder of the Leader of the Opposition in his legal battles; and
- (2) condemns former Liberal Premier Jeff Kennett for his vile and sexist comments towards young women at a Young Liberals event.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:43): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Niddrie for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Yan Yean is warned.

Leader of the Opposition

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (09:44): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) condemns the member for Hawthorn for spending more time focused on court than his community; and
- (2) calls on the Leader of the Nationals to explain why Victorians have had to pay tens of thousands of dollars for the member for Hawthorn to sit in a courtroom.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (09:44): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Narre Warren South for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Housing

Katie HALL (Footscray) (09:45): I move, by leave:

That this house notes:

- (1) in 2020 Greens councillors in Merri-bek voted against the redevelopment of Gronn Place, which now provides over 100 social homes, many supporting women escaping domestic violence; and
- (2) in the same year the member for Richmond voted against social and affordable housing that would have delivered hundreds of homes for Victorians in need.

Leave refused.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Eureka is warned.

Suburban Rail Loop

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:45): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Mordialloc for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Leader of the Opposition

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (09:46): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for throwing his staff under the bus when he blamed them for making a spreadsheet to tally votes for his own party room motion.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:46): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Hastings for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving the Western Port Highway in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Housing

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (09:46): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Greens for:

- (1) their appalling misinformation and disinformation campaign on the redevelopment of the 44 high-rise towers, sowing unnecessary fear and distress for political gain; and
- (2) their hypocrisy in demanding more social housing, just not in their backyard.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (09:47): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Eltham for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million compared to 2020, leaving Diamond Creek Road, Wattleree Road and Karingal Drive in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Leader of the Opposition

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (09:47): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for pretending to be a moderate yet failing to stand up when it counts for women, for First Nations people and for migrants against his Liberal colleagues.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

David HODGETT (Croydon) (09:48): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Bayswater for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million compared to 2020, leaving local roads in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Housing

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (09:48): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) condemns the Liberals and the Greens for their unholy alliance to deny vulnerable Victorians the opportunity to access safe and secure housing; and
- (2) notes that they worked together to block the development at Markham Estate in Ashburton, which thanks to this government delivered 178 safe and secure homes.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (09:49): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Werribee for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Shaws Road and Heaths Road in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Housing

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (09:49): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for not believing in social housing after he climbed onto the back of a ute in 2021 to oppose the Bills Street housing project, which has delivered 206 much-needed social and affordable housing homes.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:49): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Yan Yean for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving the Epping-Kilmore Road and Donnybrook Road in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Housing

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (09:50): I move, by leave:

That this house notes:

- (1) the Victorian Liberal Party have consistently shown their opposition to new social housing; and
- (2) the last time John Pesutto's Liberals were in government every single budget delivered significant cuts to housing assistance, social housing and support for disadvantaged Victorians to access the rental market.

Leave refused.

Suburban Rail Loop

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:50): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Carrum for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop whilst slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (09:50): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Cranbourne for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving the Western Port Highway in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:51): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the absent member for South Barwon for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Boundary and Reserve roads in Armstrong Creek in a terrible state of repair.

Leave refused.

Richard RIORDAN: I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the roads minister for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Lavers Hill-Cobden Road in the Corangamite shire in a terrible state of repair.

Leave refused.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:52): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for St Albans for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads in St Albans in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:52): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Monbulk for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Monbulk Road in Silvan in disrepair.

Leave refused.

Bridget VALLENCE: I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the minister for roads for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Hull Road in Mooroolbark in disrepair.

Leave refused.

Bill TILLEY (Benambra) (09:53): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the Leader of the House for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Myrtleford-Yackandandah Road in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:54): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Ivanhoe for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads like the Birchip-Sea Lake Road, the Donald-Swan Hill Road and the Calder and Sunraysia highways in a state of absolute disrepair.

Leave refused.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:54): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Bass for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Phillip Island Road in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (09:54): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Geelong for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (09:55): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Glen Waverley for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads in disrepair.

Leave refused.

MOTIONS

3962

Legislative Assembly

Thursday 17 October 2024

Kim O'KEEFFE: I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier for putting all her eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$170 million compared to 2020, leaving the Barmah-Shepparton Road in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (09:56): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Sunbury for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving the Calder Freeway in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Chris CREWTER (Mornington) (09:56): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Frankston, yet again, for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving the Nepean Highway in Frankston, Mornington and beyond in disrepair.

Leave refused.

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (09:57): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and my friend the absent member for Box Hill for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving local roads in disrepair.

Leave refused.

Nicole WERNER: I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier for putting all her eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, depriving Five Ways intersection in Warrandyte South of the funding that it desperately needs so it can urgently be fixed.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:58): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier and the member for Eureka for putting all their eggs in one basket with the \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop while slashing road maintenance funding by \$127 million, leaving Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road in a state of disrepair.

Leave refused.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Eureka, you can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Michaela Settle interjected.

The SPEAKER: Make it an hour.

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Cost of living

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (09:58): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Allan Labor government for giving multiple notices of motion to pat themselves on the back as communities in the south-east struggle with the cost-of-living crisis created by Labor.

Leave refused.

Government performance

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:59): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Labor ministry for forcing the backbench to move sledge motions but denying them leave and lacking the courage to debate them.

Leave refused.

Business of the house**Adjournment**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:59): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 29 October 2024.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements**Nido Early School Moonee Valley**

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (10:00): Moonee Valley's littlest learners have been doing exceptional work for a very worthy cause, Vision Australia. I had the great pleasure to address the Nido Early School in Moonee Valley recently. At the event I saw creativity and compassion displayed by young artists that was simply exceptional. They were putting on an amazing display of artwork to raise hundreds of dollars for Vision Australia in recognition of one of their fellow classmates. It was a display that was certainly wonderful. Vision Australia was chosen by the students because it provides national support for services for those with vision loss, but it also was an incredible demonstration of the solidarity of these young early learners for a cause related directly to them: one of their classmates has impairments with their own vision. It was nothing short of incredible to be there at this very special event. I do want to put on record my gratitude to Alexandra Dowden, the centre manager, and Kunal Saini, the curriculum leader at the Nido Early School as well as all the educators and families. The power of education was displayed at Nido Early School in Moonee Valley. It shows the impact our young people can have, that our young people continue to make a difference in their community and that our young people are certainly the future leaders of tomorrow.

Marjorie Kirkbright

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:01): I rise today to acknowledge the remarkable milestone of a very special individual Marjorie Kirkbright MBE, who recently celebrated her 100th birthday. Marjorie is a beloved member of our community. She proudly served as private secretary in the administrations of premiers Bolte, Hamer, Thompson and Kennett. Her decades of service undoubtedly shaped many important decisions in our state's history, and yes, she has many, many good stories to tell. Congratulations, Marjorie.

Hilda Hadanich

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:02): I congratulate Hilda Hadanich on her achievement of reaching 100 years. It was a privilege to share a glass of champagne with Hilda and her family on such a special occasion.

Beumaris Probus Club

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:02): I recently attended Beumaris Probus Club, and I acknowledge president David Rushworth and members of Beumaris Probus Club for hosting me for lunch and a Q and A. It was fantastic to hear from club members, to address them on local community matters and also to speak to them in more detail about the opportunity that AUKUS provides.

Highett grassy woodland

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:02): I visited, together with Michael Norris and Pauline Reynolds, the Highett grassy woodland recently. The Highett grassy woodland is a section of land within the Highett community. I send my gratitude to Michael and Pauline for their tireless advocacy in protecting this vital environmental asset and look forward to working with them in the future. The Highett grassy woodland is just behind the Safeway in Highett. It is a wonderful environmental asset. It must be preserved for the future.

Werribee Football Club

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Economic Growth) (10:03): I am a very proud local member standing here to celebrate the success of the Werribee Football Club, VFL premiers for season 2024. The Werribee Tigers held off the Southport Sharks in the grand final, roaring to victory by 6 points to break a 31-year premiership drought. You could not wipe the smile from the face of CEO Mark Penaluna when the final siren went, and justifiably so. After four grand final losses since their last premiership in 1993 it was so good to see Werribee lift the premiership trophy again. This victory means so much to the club but also to my community, who continue to celebrate, and we will long remember the victory.

I take this opportunity for some special acknowledgements. Dom Brew the grand final team captain was awarded the Bruce Montgomery Trophy for the second consecutive year as the club's best and fairest player. Jack Henderson was awarded the Norm Goss Medal as the best on ground during the VFL grand final. Dom and Jack were inducted as life members of the Werribee Football Club along with Louis Pinnock. Four players from the successful team were named in the VFL team of the year: Dom and Jack along with Riley Bice and Nathan Cooper – a remarkable achievement. Importantly, to Werribee's CEO of 21 years, the indomitable Mark Penaluna, congratulations, mate – a well-deserved flag after a near lifetime of service to the club.

Birrarrung Park

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (10:04): Residents in Bulleen are becoming increasingly concerned about the state of Birrarrung Park and how overgrown it is, particularly as it is close to a new sporting facility but also close to homes. Birrarrung Park is very popular. But it does need to be properly maintained, and I would call upon Parks Victoria to hazard-clear as much as they can Birrarrung Park before we enter what could be a dangerous fire season this summer.

Restricted breed dogs

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (10:05): Recently in Doncaster there was a dog attack from an XL bully dog, which is a banned breed of dog in the United Kingdom and which, while restricted in Victoria, is not banned. It was another terrifying dog attack. While the council will fine the owner, the dog will not be put down because the species is not banned. I again call upon the government, as I have in this chamber before, to increase dangerous dog legislation fees and also revisit some of the breeds that are considered banned and possibly increase them, but also include XL bully dogs, which are clearly dangerous and clearly can kill. They in fact killed 23 people in three years in the United Kingdom. I call on the minister to act.

Mykola Bychok

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (10:05): Can I finally congratulate Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral bishop Mykola Bychok on his elevation to cardinal in December this year. It was a wonderful announcement by His Holiness Pope Francis to award this incredible honour to Bishop Bychok, who is exceptionally well liked and very popular in the Ukrainian community and someone we all love. Слава Україні.

Lauretta Hanson and Patrick French

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (10:06): I rise to acknowledge and congratulate two exceptional athletes from the Macedon electorate who this year represented Australia on the world stage at the Paris Olympics and at the Paris Paralympics.

Congratulations to Lauretta Hanson from Fern Hill, a local cycling superstar who competed in the Olympic women's road race. Lauretta, along with fellow Victorians Grace Brown and Ruby Roseman-Gannon, made Australia enormously proud. At just 29 Lauretta finished an impressive 22nd in the event. Having grown up in a farm in Fern Hill and attended Tylden Primary School, Lauretta developed a passion for cycling early on, riding her bike around the bush tracks. Lauretta's dedication to the sport was inspired by her mother Heather, an elite cyclist in the 1970s and 80s.

Congratulations also to Patrick French from Romsey, who represented Australia in archery at the Paralympics. Competing in challenging conditions, Patrick narrowly missed advancing in his event, losing by just two points, 140–138, in the elimination round. Patrick's determination and resilience, particularly after a workplace accident in 2015 left him with life-altering injuries, is an absolute testament to his spirit. To have reached the Paralympic Games is a remarkable achievement, and Patrick inspires so many.

Both Lauretta and Patrick have made our local community proud, and I commend them for their outstanding achievements on the world stage.

Patient transport

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:07): The Victorian government has callously ceased patient transfers for many regional people. After years of calling for dialysis chairs to be installed in Cobram, which we still do not have, Cobram patients need to travel to Yarrowonga and Shepparton. We now find transport for dialysis patients will no longer be available through the patient transfer network. Let us be clear: this is not a specialised ambulance-style vehicle; this is funding a taxi so that pensioners can receive the care they need. Three Cobram residents who survive on a pension will use nearly 100 per cent of their pension to transport themselves to and from Yarrowonga three times a week for life-saving dialysis treatment. Premier Allan, you have completely abandoned these people. My understanding is that metropolitan Melbourne patient transfer remains unchanged.

On top of this, Frank Darke of Wangaratta recently had a car accident which brought upon a stroke, and Frank was taken to Royal Melbourne Hospital as his car was undrivable due to the collision. When Frank was discharged from hospital he was told he would need to catch a train to Wangaratta because patient transfer no longer is available to regional patients. This is a massive slap in the face for Frank and other regional patients who are admitted to Melbourne hospitals because our regional hospitals do not have the resources to assist them.

The lack of respect and support for regional people is a disgrace, people who have paid their taxes all their lives, and when it is time to get a hand up, they are told to find their own way home. 2026 cannot come fast enough to get rid of this appalling Allan Labor government.

Sajjad Ali and Saif Ullah

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:09): I am pleased to share the inspiring story of two remarkable constituents in my electorate: Sajjad Ali and his nephew Saif Ullah were returning home to Mill Park in the early hours after a night shift when they encountered a roaring blaze on a September morning. As soon as they realised that their 56-year-old neighbour, who uses a wheelchair for mobility, was trapped inside her home, they sprang into action. True protectors at heart, they showed exceptional courage and selflessness by breaking the windows with their bare hands to gain entry. By

that time their neighbour was in a critical condition from inhaling the thick smoke. Their bravery that fateful day saved a life, and I want to express my deepest gratitude to them for their incredible heroism.

It is worth noting that their desire to help others is a consistent part of their lives, as they are actively involved in the community organisation Joint Australian Rorwali Grand Association. JARGA is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to assisting people from the Pakistani Pashtun communities in Melbourne.

St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Cathedral Parish Melbourne

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:10): I would also like to share my experience of the wonderful family day hosted by the St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Cathedral Melbourne in Epping last weekend. It was a delight to unveil their new commercial kitchen, made possible through collaborative funding between their community and the Allan Labor government. Special thanks to Father Varghese Vavolil, board of director Johnson George, secretary Sibi Issac, trustees Anto Thomas and Cletus and the rest of the executive committee for organising this wonderful celebration.

Robbie Heritage

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (10:10): Robbie Heritage was a legend in our community, a wonderful character, generous, caring, a great sense of humour. Robbie was well known and respected right across the Yarra Valley. I wish to pay tribute to Robert Frank Heritage, who passed away peacefully in late September aged 83. The love our community had for this man was demonstrated by over 2500 locals attending his funeral at Heritage Pioneers Chapel in Woori Yallock, Robbie's family business.

Robbie was a dedicated and loving family man and extremely passionate about the family's funeral services business, Heritage & Heritage Funerals. It was so important to Robbie that Heritage & Heritage Funerals was an independent family owned and operated funeral services business, with families at the heart of what they did. Robbie was deeply committed to caring for families at their most vulnerable times, helping them through their grief, offering compassion and support, and he was often seen up the back of the chapel to make sure each service was a beautiful life celebration. Robbie will be fondly remembered by the Yarra Valley community. My deepest condolences to Robbie's wife Elaine, daughters Sandra and Janet, son Gavan and the entire Heritage family. Vale, Robbie Heritage.

Les Sharp

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (10:12): I wish to pay tribute to Les Sharp and congratulate him for an outstanding 65 years of service with the Wandin CFA fire brigade, an icon in our community, an outstanding firefighter and well decorated. Les, thank you for 65 years as a volunteer firefighter.

Zulya Kamalova

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (10:12): I rise to mourn the passing of Zulya Kamalova, a much-loved musician and director of the multicultural music organisation the Boîte. Zulya was born in the Tatarstan–Udmurtia region of Central Russia and began performing Russian and Tartar songs from a very early age. Her powerful voice would go on to be one of her greatest strengths and would take her all across the globe.

Zulya was a composer, creative director, collaborator, facilitator, and an incredible force in music. As a solo performer and with her band, the Children of the Underground, she released 10 critically acclaimed albums, earning ARIA nominations and taking out the ARIA for best world music album in 1997. Zulya joined the Boîte in 2022, where she worked to champion countless musicians and promote artists from many different communities. Zulya left an indelible mark on Australia's folk and

world music landscapes and on the careers of a community of musicians and artists. Ten years ago in an interview Zulya was asked, ‘What would you do to make a difference in the world?’ She said:

If I could I would make everyone less greedy and self-centered. Alas, that’s not possible. So I make music and art, which hopefully helps.

It does help, and in Zulya’s life it changed the world for many. Zulya packed a lot into her 55 years, and her work lives on as an example of how we can use our strengths and talents to lift others up. I extend my deepest sympathies to Zulya’s family, to her partner Andrew and daughter Zifa and to her many friends.

Prahran Football Club

Sam HIBBINS (Prahran) (10:13): Get around the Prahran footy club, the famous Two Blues, for winning the 2024 Victorian Amateur Football Association division 1 premiership. Prahran capped off a fantastic year with a really hard-fought victory over Parkside to collect the club’s 13th flag. The dedication, skill and commitment of the whole club were on full display throughout the season, their premiership success testament to all the time and effort the players and volunteers have put into the club. I would especially like to acknowledge the leadership of coach Craige Milward and captain Rory Brodie, whose determination was instrumental in getting the team over the line on the day. To everyone at Prahran footy club, congratulations on a well-deserved premiership. I have been a proud sponsor of the club for a number of years now, and as a former amo player myself, it is always great to see a suburban club with such a storied history rise through the ranks of the amateurs. I cannot wait to see them in premier division C next year at the newly upgraded Toorak Park, which is coming up an absolute treat. Go, Two Blues!

Pete Steedman

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:14): I rise to give thanks to the life of Pete Steedman. Alan Peter Steedman died aged 80 in July, and a celebration of his life was held at Trades Hall last month. Pete was the federal member for Casey from 1983 to 1984, the first term of the new Hawke Labor government. The Honourable Gareth Evans was among those to share reminiscences and to roast Pete at that memorial service.

He had a diverse career. As a university student Pete was editor of *Farrago* at Melbourne University and later editor of *Lot’s Wife* at Monash University. His leadership as executive director of Ausmusic from 1988 to 1996 provided great support for the Australian music industry. He also led the challenging policy work to support timber workers in past state Labor administrations.

I have no regrets voting for Pete for preselection for Jaga Jaga back in 1995 for the 1996 federal election. While unsuccessful in that endeavour, Pete was a good friend and mentor throughout my first 33 years in the Labor Party and political life. I will miss seeing the old blue Merc with a PS registration plate cruising around my Ivanhoe electorate where Pete lived.

Many years ago I would make the annual pilgrimage to Pete’s place at Hurstbridge with other true believers for the Guy Fawkes night event. Be assured, Pete had a suitable effigy of someone who had crossed him, his friends or workers to put atop the bonfire every year. Many of those attendees went on to lead our country, to serve Labor governments or to lead the labour movement. Pete was a loyal friend to many, generous to all and a fierce advocate for working people. Vale, Pete Steedman.

Mornington Peninsula District Scouts

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (10:16): It was a pleasure not long ago to head to the Mornington Peninsula District Scouts annual report and awards presentation alongside the member for Mornington. I just want to thank the young MCs George and Louise, who did a fantastic job, as well as Paul van Bergen, the district commissioner, and deputy chief commissioner for Scouts Victoria Daniella for having us along. A big thankyou to all the Joeys, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers and Rovers that

told us about their last 12 months in scouting. I look forward to getting back to the Rosebud Sea Scouts Hall very, very soon.

Rye Yacht Club

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (10:16): I also had the pleasure last week to head to the Rye Yacht Club for their opening day. Rye Yacht Club is a fantastic community sailing club down on the Mornington Peninsula that last year was awarded as the Discover Sailing Centre of the Year by Yachting Victoria for 2023. They do an incredible job teaching water safety and sailing to young members of the community who possibly cannot afford to join some of the more exclusive clubs that we see on the peninsula. Thank you for all the work that Neville Taylor and the rest of his team do down there.

Safety Beach Sailing Club

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (10:17): I also had the pleasure to go to Safety Beach Sailing Club last week. Their commodore Tony Christmas had a fantastic day for the opening of their sailing season. It was an incredible afternoon, one of the best spots you will ever find on the Mornington Peninsula, and the sounding of the cannon was something that kept everybody awake and they celebrated well into the afternoon. Thank you to Tony and the team at Safety Beach.

Shoreham Tennis Club

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (10:17): I also had the chance to head out to Shoreham Tennis Club last Friday, where a whole bunch of youngsters came out for a hit as well as the parents for a few drinks in the afternoon. I encourage anybody over on the Western Port side and close to Shoreham Tennis Club on Friday afternoons to go for a casual drink and a hit of tennis. Get out there.

Meera Mansukhani

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Jobs and Industry, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Women) (10:17): Earlier this year I met a wonderful woman in my electorate called Meera Mansukhani. She submitted to the Parliament Prize last year as a young student a piece of writing called *Time to Make Unconscious Racism a Conscious Reality*. In a tribute to her work, I am going to read out parts of her submission:

Unconscious racism.

A term that's not widely utilised in day-to-day life, is sadly a prominent reality for thousands of people across Australia.

In schools and society, it is accepted and taught that an individual's worth is not predicated upon their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or any demographic standard.

This issue stems from being culturally conditioned to believing that such demographics, more importantly, one's race, do indeed matter.

Research by Australian universities investigated experiences of racial discrimination in schools, and found that 40% of students from non-Anglo or European descent have reported enduring a form of racism from peers.

This is fundamentally where the problem lies.

As a person of colour, I too held an unconscious bias on my own capabilities and aspirations, and how my race would be a benefactor to what I would and would not be able to accomplish in life.

This has translated into workplace racism, and growing up seeing no one like myself in the Australian media or in any broadcasted industry, made me believe that these jobs were not for us.

Wycheproof King of the Mountain

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:19): I rise once again like the world's smallest mountain, Mount Wycheproof, to congratulate Rory and his committee on another exceptional King of the Mountain event. This is Australia's toughest foot race, and I can tell you that from my own experience. It is just 1 kilometre in distance with a 42-metre incline, and it is brutal. The kings carry 60 kilos of wheat and wool on their backs while we queens carry 20. The town doubles in size for this one day in September,

and it is just fantastic. Although I finished in the top 10 this year, I am certainly not committing to next year or any further events. Well done to Rory and your committee.

Douglas Woods and Michael Hogarth

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:19): Mildura recently lost two legends: Douglas ‘Woodsie’ Woods of Woodsies, the infamous gem shop, one of our family’s favourite places in Mildura, and Michael ‘Hungry’ Hogarth, who lost his battle with the beast earlier this month. Mick was a legend in the Sunraysia sporting community, winning eight football premierships and the Innes Medal three times as Sunraysia’s best cricketer. In a divine stroke, his beloved Imperials won the 2024 Sunraysia Football Netball League premiership during the break, a poetic way to send Mick off. Vale, Mick and Woodsie, two incredible Mildura legends.

Western suburbs Vietnamese community

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (10:20): I rise to acknowledge local doctor and community leader Dr Pham Phuc Nhan of St Albans, and in particular the Vietnamese community in the west. With the partnership of the Quang Minh Temple and the Senior Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan they have been extraordinary in their fundraising efforts, not only in contributing towards important fundraising for the Joan Kirner Women’s and Children’s Hospital in St Albans but we also now see their fundraising events continue for Footscray Hospital. They have raised an astonishing amount of over \$262,000. Dr Pham has been an absolutely true leader when it comes to fundraising. I do want to thank him and his family and also make special mention of Mr Frank Cheng, Mr Tan Hung and Ms Kim Thanh for their exceptional contributions to this effort.

Pietro Cianflone

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (10:21): On another matter, I would like to pass on my sincere condolences to the member for Pascoe Vale following the sad passing of his father Pietro Cianflone. Pietro was a community and family man, always there to help his family and community. My thoughts and prayers are with the member for Pascoe Vale and his family. Vale, Pietro Cianflone.

Health funding

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (10:22): I rise today on Victoria’s health crisis. While the Labor government obsesses over its Big Build, with major projects blowing out by more than \$40 billion and a white elephant \$216 billion Suburban Rail Loop with no business case, our health system is reaching breaking point. We have ambulance ramping, high elective surgery waiting lists, underfunded hospitals and, sadly, Victorians dying or not being treated properly because of this government’s failures. More than half of the state’s health services are running critically low on money, with data earlier this year revealing 41 of our state’s 75 health services did not have 14-day cash supplies to cover operating expenses. Such shortages mean health services are making cuts, including through staff lay-offs and on preventative health and training and more. Hospitals like the Rosebud Hospital also linger in urgent need of redevelopment. Yet we have the government still finding money to spend \$100,000 on a new Triple Zero Victoria logo. We also have continued ambulance ramping, with ambulances waiting outside hospitals, often unable to quickly transfer critically ill patients into emergency departments due to a lack of available beds and then not being able to get to other jobs. Under Labor a recent report also revealed a record 245 patients dying or suffering serious harm due to errors. (*Time expired*)

Theo Zographos

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (10:23): It is no secret that the former endorsed Liberal candidate for Chisholm Theo Zographos and I do not have the same politics. In fact he ran for

the same seat as I did, Oakleigh, in 2014, and he also ran for that seat in 2010. But despite those differences, we worked together quite cooperatively at Monash council, because at the local level Labor and Liberal do not really come into it as much when you are talking about parking or rubbish collection or local roads. It is also no secret that Carina Garland, the federal member for Chisholm, is a friend of mine and an outstanding federal member of Parliament. I felt obliged to comment today when I found out a few weeks ago that the Liberal Party had disendorsed or removed – put aside – a homegrown boy, Theo Zographos, who did the work in the party to get preselected and who has been in the community for years, for someone who is effectively an import, Dr Katie Allen. I have got nothing against Katie Allen – I worked with Katie Allen when she was the member for Higgins as well – but this is not about her, it is about why the Liberal Party just moved aside a preselected candidate, even more so because he is a Greek Australian. The Liberal Party do not have one Greek Australian background MP in Victoria, from my notes. It is appalling behaviour. He deserves better and the Greek community deserves better in Chisholm.

Allan Robinson

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (10:25): I have a love story about a beautiful man, Allan Robinson, his gorgeous Pam and his lovely family – a man who loved learning and mentoring and who was adored by students and colleagues over more than five decades of teaching. He loved basketball and was loved by players. There was overwhelming love for Allan at his service at Ivanhoe town hall. Greg Jeffers, who worked closely with Allan to imagine and create the award-winning new stadium at Monty spoke of Allan as a gentleman. Allan was full of kindness and respect and gentleness. Greg said Allan was the kind of man that we aspire to be. We know his children Shane, Tanya and Jessica, their partners Pip, Matt and Darren and their children Rorie, Ruby, Ollie, Quinn, Ben, Olivia, Holly, Jack, Chloe and Ace will help create a better world reflective of Allan's values.

Greg remembered many calls of 'Hey, Robbo' as he and Allan wove their way through Monty students. He was amazed – 'Who is this popular guy?' At a Greensborough street stall handing out cards about Monty's wonderful new three-court stadium, young adults glanced at me, looked at their cards, walked on and then backtracked, saying, 'Hey, that's Robbo on that. What's he up to?' The smiles and the love past students had for him was so clear. Greg said Allan cared for each and every one of them as if they were his own children. People felt nurtured by Allan, which was his remarkable gift to us. Allan lobbied hard and gently for a new modern stadium at the school, Monty, and he got it. His name is on those new courts, honouring him. However, Allan's true legacy is the thousands of lives he transformed through how much he loved. Greg thanked Allan for his impact, and Greg is not the only one who owes thanks to Allan – we all do.

Middle East conflict

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (10:26): Today I grieve for the many Lebanese families in my electorate, many of whom have lost loved ones, and all who are worried about friends and relatives back home. I thank those in Lebanon who are helping to feed and house the displaced. Despite that they are one of the most hospitable and generous nationalities on the planet, I know the toll this is taking on everyone. I also thank local leaders and organisations for all they are doing to support our community in this distressing time and to support those newly arrived who escaped the conflict but are suffering much loss and trauma.

I again condemn in the strongest possible terms all who kill innocent people, especially children, who break international law, who target schools and hospitals, who starve or terrorise and who seek to make others suffer. I thank the federal government for their ongoing diplomatic efforts and calls for a ceasefire and an end to the death and starvation of civilians. While some parties are choosing to exploit people's fear, pain and trauma for political gain and threatening our multicultural and multifaith haven here in Victoria with disinformation, encouraging people to get more radical, I thank the many doing

everything they can to turn down the temperature, to heal the pain and to collectively work for a better and more peaceful world.

It is easy to put fear and division and a sense of exclusion into people's hearts. It is much harder to instil love and hope and a sense of generosity towards each other. If we cannot encourage truthful and respectful discussion and dialogue here, we cannot expect diplomacy to deliver peace overseas. Hate begets hate, violence begets violence and only love begets love.

Community safety

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:28): On 7 October the Jewish community came together to pray for the safe return of hostages, for peace in Israel and for a strong and united Jewish community. It was a very sombre vigil attended by many thousands in the community who wanted to grieve and wanted to grieve in a communal way.

Unfortunately, in addition to the personal and communal grief that members of the community have had to deal with, the community has also faced unprecedented antisemitism over the last 12 months. Since 7 October last year Victoria Police has investigated more than 260 prejudice-motivated crimes, and more than 60 people have been charged with offences. Of those 60-plus individuals, 80 per cent were motivated by antisemitism.

As a democratic society we like to pride ourselves on the right to peaceful protest, but the right to protest should never come at the expense of vilification of individuals or groups within our society. The flying of flags of proscribed terrorist organisations, the lauding of leaders of terrorist organisations who have openly called for the destruction of Israel, the chanting of slogans denouncing all Jewish supporters of Israel as terrorists, the yelling at staff in shops simply because they are working for Israeli-owned businesses or businesses believed to be somehow supporting Israel – not one of these actions will help resolve the conflict or bring peace to the Middle East. Violence and division overseas should never result in violence and division being brought to our streets.

Sikh Volunteers Australia

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:29): I would like to take the opportunity to thank and congratulate the Sikh Volunteers for the extraordinary milestone of the opening of their kitchen. The very hardworking member for Hastings was able to represent the Premier and the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, but I do want to thank Jaswinder, Manpreet and Sukhwinder, who never ask for any praise. It is an organisation that is beloved not just in Victoria and nationally but internationally. We are very lucky to have their work.

Bills

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Danny Pearson:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (10:30): When I was a teenager, a young girl, a teenager called Anna Wood, died from an ecstasy overdose. Some of you might remember that. She was in Sydney in 1995, and it made national news. Her death meant that I have never tried ecstasy, but shouldn't people not have to die to prevent other people from suffering due to drug use? Why can't we support this bill, which saves lives, without having to rely on horrific public deaths of other people? Can't we have a health-led response that means that young people who are attending festivals and raves – enjoying life – have the opportunity to live another day and see their parents the next morning? Can't we focus not on morals and high ground but on health and care, reality and families? Isn't it calculatingly cynical for those opposite to oppose such life-saving care for young people?

We know that it works, which is why this government is seeking to pass this bill. We do not want to see more young people – anybody – dying that do not need to die. Seatbelts do not condone speeding. Life jackets do not mean we accept drowning. Pill testing will stop people from dying, and I support this bill.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (10:32): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

This house has debated this bill for a considerable amount of time. We spent all the government business program time on Tuesday on this particular bill, and we spent some time on this bill yesterday evening before the house adjourned. I believe we should be moving to the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. We have 13 speakers on our side of the house that want to speak on that bill. If we spend any more time on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024 those people will not have the opportunity to speak.

Victorians need to have the lid lifted on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill – code for gas ban bill. Buried in this particular bill are regulatory powers for the government to secretly ban gas anywhere they want and anyhow they want. This is another example of enabling legislation which looks innocuous when it is in the house but, when the reality comes through and after the Governor in Council signs off on regulations by the government and it is enacted, no-one can do anything about. We want our 13 members on this side of the chamber to have the opportunity to talk about this particular legislation and particularly to talk about what a further ban on gas will mean for Victorian households and for Victorian businesses.

In my electorate I represent quite a few food-manufacturing businesses. They are bleeding cash with the increase in the price of gas in this state. We need to make sure there is an increased supply of gas in this state so that they can continue to operate, so that they can continue to create jobs in the community and so that they can continue to manufacture the food that you and I like to eat that is actually made here in Australia.

I understand by that look – you are raising your eyebrow at me – that this is a procedural debate, but it is a very important one to have. I would like to have support from the other side of the house to adjourn the debate on the current bill before the house and move to the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill so that can have a fair hearing in the limited time that we have left today. With three pieces of legislation on the business agenda each sitting week, I believe there should be a fair amount of time attributed to each of those pieces of legislation.

The drugs, poisons and controlled substances bill has had a fair hearing. Those on this side of the house that wanted to speak have had the opportunity to speak. I understand the government have their challenges because they have greater numbers in the house, but it is about fairness and equity, and we have 13 members that want to speak on the next bill.

The fact is that this has been debated on two of the business days this week. Why can't we move to the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024 and, as I said, lift the lid on what is in that bill? It would give the members on this side of the house an opportunity to have their say, put forward their arguments and expose to Victorians what is buried in this piece of legislation. As I said at the start, the regulatory powers that are in this bill – they are buried in this bill so that no-one knows what they are – enable the government to, by regulation, ban gas. The Premier stitched up the *Herald Sun* with her announcement a few weeks ago saying that she was not banning gas at all.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Nationals has moved an entirely reasonable motion that the house can understand. He has made the case himself that it is a procedural motion –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order is?

Colin Brooks: The point of order is he is now straying from that motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The Leader of the Nationals had started to stray.

Peter WALSH: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and thank you, minister at the table, for drawing attention to the fact that I was straying in saying that the Premier stitched up the *Herald Sun* on a particular issue.

Colin Brooks: On a further point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member is clearly defying your ruling.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Nationals will come back to the procedural motion on the adjournment of debate, please.

Peter WALSH: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. As you have ruled, it is a procedural debate. It is so important that both sides of the chamber have a period of time to talk about the legislation before the house in these sitting weeks. We do not have a large legislative agenda anymore in this chamber; we usually have only three bills a week. Let us apportion that time equitably so that people have an opportunity to speak on those three bills before the house.

As I said, we have 13 members on this side of the house that want to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill, and if we do not move to it, they will not have their time. I would urge the government to support my motion to adjourn. If we finish on that bill, we can come back to the drugs, poisons and controlled substances bill.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:37): I am very disappointed that I did not get to my feet before the Leader of the Nationals, because I am very, very passionate about the bill and the contribution that I want to make. I sat in the chair yesterday, and people had opportunities to make their contributions on legislation that is important to them, and now I am being silenced. Every Nationals member has had the opportunity to speak on this bill, right? Every Nationals member has had the opportunity to contribute to the bills that they have wanted to contribute to up until today, but I have not had the opportunity to contribute.

Members interjecting.

Juliana ADDISON: I will take the interjection from the member for Polwarth about wasting time in this place. We are now going to use up 30 minutes, which could have been three speakers' time, debating whether those speakers get to talk about it. This is about grandstanding. We are not going to agree to the motion because we agreed –

Members interjecting.

Juliana ADDISON: We agreed to a government business program, following the processes of this house, on Tuesday afternoon, and the government business program said we were going to debate different legislation across the three days. I am here representing my electorate –

Members interjecting.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Nationals was heard in virtual silence when he moved this adjournment motion. He was heard respectfully, and I would ask you, Deputy Speaker, to advise those on the other side of the house not to try and shout down the member, who is making valid points.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In brevity, the Speaker reminded us all earlier that the Leader of the Nationals did talk about respect for members on their feet, and I encourage all members to adhere to the Leader of the Nationals' sentiments.

Juliana ADDISON: With reference to the Leader of the Nationals' sentiment, he talked about fairness and equity in his contribution to this procedural debate, and I would like to see that fairness

and equity extended to me and the other members on this side of the house. I would really like to talk about why pill testing is an important issue to me and to my community and to the generation coming through.

What we are seeing here is a disjointed approach. Once again the Nationals are flexing their muscles because they feel they need to be the opposition right now, because the opposition, the Libs, cannot run their own ship. So the member for –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker: relevance.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Wendouree had strayed. Please come back to the procedural motion.

Juliana ADDISON: I will take the interjection from the member for Lowan, who is not in her seat, and say that she does like it, because she is very ambitious about her leadership plans and her leadership agenda for the Nationals. I really think that the Nationals will be seizing opportunities.

Wayne Farnham: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member has defied your ruling. Bring her back to the debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Wendouree – on the procedural motion – to continue.

Juliana ADDISON: I thank you for your guidance and your advice, and I thank the member for Narracan for the interjection. The procedural motion before us is that we should cease the debate on the pill-testing bill and prevent members of the house from making their own contributions – we should waste 30 minutes of the house's time. There are only seven remaining speakers from the government side, but we will use up 30 minutes – three speakers' time – to have a debate. The procedural motion will not be successful, so this is pure grandstanding on behalf of the Leader of the Nationals to try and show who is in charge of the ship right now. The member for Brighton does not like that. It is like an egg timer, waiting for him to jump to his feet. But we are seeing some leadership in terms of His Majesty's opposition, from the Leader of the Nationals, that we are not seeing from the Liberals, because the Liberals are too focused on themselves at the moment, on their disunity. Egg timer!

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, the member who acts in the chair would understand that members cannot speak twice on a bill, and so the motion was only able to be moved by the Leader of the Nationals.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order was made succinctly and then some. The member for Wendouree, please refer to –

Juliana ADDISON: I look forward to the opportunity to contribute. I do not agree with this procedural motion.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:42): On the procedural motion, I stand to speak very strongly in support of the Leader of the Nationals' procedural motion to move away from this current bill. For the background of the house and those watching, each week there is a set-out plan for the government that they move by way of the government business program, and this week they set out three bills. The normal process would be that each day one bill is dealt with. There are occasions where a bill is dealt with a little bit on a different day, sometimes. But the only reason for the delay in moving to the next bill is because it implements the government's gas ban. We have just heard from the Labor Party, from the government, that they have packed out a speaking list on the pill-testing bill – a packed speaking list – to block out the entire morning of debate on the pill-testing bill so that there will be almost no time at all for any members to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024 or on what many call the gas ban bill, because we know how little time there is for debate today. There is so little time for debate today. We know how much the government wants to cover it

up and not move from the current bill to the building legislation. How shameful that the government would misuse time in this house to stop debate on the third bill on their own program. I think it is important to note, by the way – it is entirely relevant.

Juliana Addison: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, he is misleading the house, because every member deserves to speak on this legislation who wants to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

James NEWBURY: Continuing on the procedural motion, the house will remember that the coalition sought to take the pill-testing bill into consideration in detail and the government said no. So we have government members standing up – and they will, one after another – to say, ‘We want to speak on the pill-testing bill, we want to speak on the pill-testing bill,’ but will they take it to consideration in detail? Scared, scared – of course they will not. This is a stunt by the government to block the Parliament dealing with the building legislation – that is what this is about – and it has been called out. It has been called out because the building legislation deserves proper scrutiny. You cannot ban gas in everybody’s home and not allow this Parliament time to consider it. A ban on gas in everybody’s home – this is draconian. No wonder the government is packing out a speakers list on anything it can think of to stop an opportunity to debate the bill. And the government has confirmed it. They have confirmed they have got a packed list that is going to take hours – hours of debate on the pill-testing bill. For those watching, this is the third day the government has debated the pill-testing bill – the third day.

Of course they are packing the time of the Parliament on this bill, because the building legislation bill is very, very concerning. It allows unfettered power. I will not go too much into the detail of that bill now. Perhaps at some stage today we will have an opportunity to at least consider it briefly, in passing. Who would know? The government have already started to pack out their speaking list for today to cover for the fact that they do not want the building legislation debated. That is what this debate is about. So the government, one after another, will stand up and say, ‘We want to talk about something else.’ Of course they want to talk about something else, and when they vote against this motion, that is what it will prove: they want to hide from the gas ban. That is what a vote against this motion proves: the Labor Party want to hide the gas ban bill. How outrageous. How outrageous that Victorians cannot have their concerns about the government’s gas ban ventilated in this chamber. What an absolute outrage. So we will shortly see the government again try and hide their gas ban by voting against this motion, but we will support it.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (10:47): Deputy Speaker, it would be no surprise to you that I rise to speak against the motion of the Leader of the Nationals. I would like to begin by just saying that government is a gift, government really is a gift, and it is something that when you have it enables you to exercise the powers that come with government judiciously. You are able to do that because you have the respect of the people of Victoria. This government takes that very, very seriously, and it really does wish that in this place of great democracy it had an opposition that would be able to come up against it for the betterment of the people of Victoria.

In our government business program this week we outlined the three bills that we wanted to bring to this place, and one of those bills, which we were on before we were interrupted with that procedural motion, is to do with not only the future for the betterment of the state but, importantly, the future of our kids. Is it any surprise that there are so many members in this place that want to get up and speak to that bill? Is it any surprise?

Richard Riordan interjected.

Gary MAAS: No. As a government, as I said, you come together in a unified way to set out your agenda, and the audacity that somehow this opposition want to come together in a united fashion to be able to debate is something that is anathema in this place. This opposition cannot come together.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the members for Polwarth and Wendouree would like to have a chat, they can do it outside and I can arrange it.

Gary MAAS: The audacity that this opposition somehow want to come together in a united fashion and debate against the government in a united fashion. We know you are not united, right? We know you are not united – come on, bathing boxes. Get back to your bathing boxes.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I must stand up in your defence and ask that the member refer to people by their correct titles.

Juliana Addison interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wendouree is warned. There is no point of order that I heard on titles.

James Newbury interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please do not reflect on the Chair, member for Brighton.

Gary MAAS: Our pill-testing legislation deserves to be debated properly. It deserves to have more speakers speaking to it. I speak against the motion.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:51): I rise to support very strongly the motion that my colleague the Leader of the Nationals put forward about adjourning this debate that now has dragged on for three days. The government's argument is nothing more than crocodile tears – 'Oh, we all want to have our say on the pill-testing bill.' This government, your people, voted against debating this in detail. What sort of backbench gets the dregs of speaking opportunities on the third day just to pad it out? The member for Wendouree, who is up there on the back bench like she has been sent in to keep the quorum up, wants to prattle on about this. Did we see her stand up? Did we see her and other Labor members calling for the denial of this adjournment? Did we see them argue for consideration in detail, a real opportunity to debate the merits of these bill? Did we see them do that? Did we see them stand up against their buddy? No, they did not, because this is just a political stunt, continuing this bill today.

It is a political stunt, and why is it a political stunt? Because it is designed to hide the fact that in the one week that the government put a bill out that they were happy to talk about, which was organising extra gas storage to keep the industry and their donors happy – they were happy to add a bit of storage – at the same time we have got members from some of the coldest parts of the state and new growth areas around the state saying, 'We don't want to let our constituents know, we don't want our voters to know, that our big, mean, nasty hand of government can go and turn your gas off. We don't want to talk about a bill today that's going to allow government operatives to go and turn the gas off but, what's worse, actually empower the government to fine and punish plumbers who want to hook up a gas cooktop.' I mean, this is a government –

Pauline Richards: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, as you know, the member is straying from the tight procedural debate that we are debating.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member had strayed. The member also interjecting in the middle of a point of order while he is on his feet is not necessarily a good idea.

Richard RIORDAN: The reality is we must support this adjournment because it is vital that the people of Victoria get an opportunity to air their grievances and concerns about a draconian policy. This is a policy that essentially says, 'We're going to criminalise putting gas in homes.'

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, as I said in an earlier point of order, the Leader of the Nationals trod a fairly fine line in talking about the procedural debate without getting into the substance of the bill he wishes to debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is this relevance?

Colin Brooks: The member on his feet is not being relevant to the debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Polwarth had strayed. I understand context is allowed. However, you cannot debate the bill, you can only debate the adjournment of the current bill.

Richard RIORDAN: We are talking about the reasons – and we will continue to talk about the reasons – why this adjournment is so important. This adjournment is important because this government is abusing its capacity in this Parliament to stop a good, honest airing of its legislation. This government is claiming it needs to – and that it is vital for it to – continue on the pill-testing legislation. We know that on Tuesday when the government had the opportunity to put its agenda forward it refused the opposition’s request to debate pill testing in detail. As my colleague the member for Brighton said earlier, for those listening and watching, this is a natural process. If this government was genuine about debate on pill testing, it would have allowed consideration in detail so that we could have asked about the many, many loophole problems that exist in that piece of legislation.

But at the same time, the government must not be allowed to have its cake and eat it too. It wants to use a piece of legislation to filibuster and waste the time of this house when there is something as vital as the energy supply to discuss. This legislation that we are not debating today is at the heart of the housing crisis and the energy crisis, both of which this government is front and centre of. This piece of legislation exacerbates the energy and housing crises and the affordability crisis in this state, and the opposition must be allowed time to air the concerns of so many Victorians that are desperately and deeply worried about where this government is heading.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (10:56): It probably will not surprise you that I also rise to oppose the motion to adjourn debate moved by the Leader of the Nationals, who I notice has not actually remained in the chamber to hear the procedural debate. There has been a lot of pretence from the opposition speakers that there is some fixed rule in this place that you do one bill per day, and one bill only. Even in my own limited time in this place, I have observed that that is regularly not the case. There is a lot of variation, just as there has been variation this week. We had more than one bill on Tuesday, multiple bills – the SEC bill and other bills. We only returned very briefly yesterday to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024, and there is plenty of time. I note it is not even 11 o’clock yet on the third day of the sitting week and there remains plenty of time. In fact we all look forward to the debate on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024.

But I do think that we have heard a little. Indeed as the Minister for Creative Industries pointed out, we have had some anticipation of the debate, if you like, from the member for Brighton and the member for Polwarth. It is very obvious that what they want to speak about with respect to the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill appears to be, if I may say, the same somewhat tired and repetitive lines we have heard about banning gas. We have heard those lines all week already.

Members interjecting.

Nathan LAMBERT: If I can take up the interjections, they prove exactly my point. These are matters and this is a debate that has in fact been relevant to the subject matter of a number of debates already this week. Those of us who had to sit in here during the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Bill 2024 will remember what is a relatively technical bill – and I should say I appreciate the contributions of the member for Gippsland South, who of course knows the industry, the area and the technology well and who did go to the technical matters in that bill. But most opposition speakers took it to exactly the point where the member for Brighton and member for Polwarth want to go, which is to all of this talk and over-the-top discussion about banning gas. Frankly, we had to sit in this chamber and listen to I think literally north of an hour of complaints about the Minister for Energy and Resources. I do not want to in any way anticipate what we might hear on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill, but I suspect it will not be about technical

matters related to that bill. It probably will not even be related to clauses in that bill, it will be further repetitive complaining about the Minister for Energy and Resources and repetition of these points about there being lots of gas and about gas being important to industry and so forth.

I reiterate that opportunities to raise those particular matters and that particular form of debate will not only occur this afternoon but have in fact occurred all week. In fact, given the very general nature of that debate, all of us in the chamber would recognise that the opposition could have used their grievance speaking opportunities to further add to that general debate.

James Newbury interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: The member for Brighton interjects, and we will see, when debate comes – and come it will – on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill, the degree to which it reflects the specifics of that bill or the degree to which it goes back to the general debate to which I have just alluded. The Leader of the Nationals said they had 13 speakers who wanted to speak. He is looking for therefore more than 130 minutes worth of time on the bill. I would put politely that I suspect the substantive points that need to be made will be made a lot more quickly than that.

In finishing I also want to come back and just speak to the importance of further discussion on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill. It has been an important and high-quality debate. We have heard some personal stories of the member for Frankston, who is here, the member for Footscray, the member for Melton and indeed the member for Yan Yean speaking earlier – some very moving personal discussion about the bill that we did have in front of us until this adjournment motion. It is also I think an important bill because it has that property that we are talking about – an important broader principle about allowing health-led measures on something that is still unlawful, and that is an ethical question that is worth deliberating at some length. I do hope I get the opportunity, if this motion is unsuccessful, to further contribute to that debate myself.

In conclusion, I would very much like to oppose the motion to adjourn debate. I do hope that it loses and we can get back to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill and hear more from the member for Wendouree.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (25): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, 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'Keefe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallenge, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner

Noes (49): Juliana Addison, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, 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, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (11:08): I really welcome the opportunity to stand and contribute to this bill, representing my community and having my say on a bill that is before the house today. Today I rise to speak in support of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024 and really do genuinely welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important debate for our state. First and foremost, I would really like to acknowledge the leadership of the Premier on this important matter and her contribution to the debate. I do share her view that our young

people are smart and want information and that they should have access to honest and health-focused information. The evidence tells us that pill testing saves lives and that this harm reduction strategy allows a person who is already in possession of a drug to test it and find out what is actually in it. Many studies have found that pill testing can change people's drug-taking behaviour, helping to save lives.

The reality in our state is that we have seen a rise in drug-related emergency department admissions and overdose deaths. The data shows that Victorian paramedics responded to more drug overdoses at festivals in the first three months of 2024 than during all of 2023. As a parent and a former teacher, for 12 years I spent time with kids while I was working in the Ballarat Clarendon boarding house and the kids were going to festivals. I was talking to them about being safe, talking to them about making good decisions, talking to them about being informed and saying, 'Do you really know what you're doing? Really think and be safe.'

I cannot sit down and not contribute to this important debate that will save lives. It will particularly be important to those young people – the ones that I used to teach and I used to care for, and my own kids, who are 16 and 14, attending their first music festival – and encourage them to make informed decisions about risk-taking behaviour, encourage them to actually ask questions and be informed about what they may or may not take and how the chemicals might impact them and consider whether they actually want to consume these pills at all. We know that pill testing prevents young people from using unusually strong or contaminated drugs. We know that pill testing increases the knowledge consumers have about certain chemicals and drugs and the impact and the effects that they may have.

Importantly, pill testing involves conversations around safer drug use and reducing harm with health professionals. It ultimately saves lives. One life that was tragically lost was Alex Ross-King, who died of an MDMA overdose at the FOMO Festival in New South Wales in 2019. Alex was just 19 years of age. Her brave mother Jennifer Ross-King is a powerful advocate for reform following the devastating death of her darling daughter. At a press conference on 2 October 2023 in Sydney Jennifer made an emotional plea, begging to make change so no-one else loses a child. Her advocacy was compelling, and her grief was palpable.

The reason I am supporting this bill is to save lives and prevent unnecessary deaths, like Alex's, that devastate the lives of so many. I want to really thank the Minister for Mental Health in the other place for the work that she and her office have done to bring this bill to this place. I want to thank the department for all their efforts, because this is important legislation. There is widespread support not only across my community but across Victoria for this reform, whether it be festivalgoers, concerned parents or healthcare workers, a number of whom have reached out to my office to discuss this issue. Following another unnecessary death of a young person at a music festival, a nurse in her 50s contacted my electorate office to express her concerns and advocate for pill testing. She had never contacted an MP before about any issue but felt compelled to do it over this issue because of her strong support for pill testing and harm minimisation. We had a really interesting and informative discussion about pill testing and harm prevention from her perspective as a nurse. I want to thank her for her advocacy and so many for their advocacy who have shared their knowledge and life experience pertaining to pill testing or the consequences of their loved ones not having access to pill testing.

It was the scientific research and these conversations that have contributed to the introduction of this bill. In June this year the Premier committed to implementing a drug-checking program in Victoria, and this bill will allow for a trial to commence before the end of the year. This complements our state's \$95 million multiyear statewide action plan, which is already well underway and combating drug harm via expanded services, targeted support and strengthened oversight.

This bill proposes amendments to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 – yes, 1981; it was a long time ago that act was introduced – in order to authorise and establish a framework for drug checking in Victoria, as well as to provide relevant, necessary statutory immunities and protections. The bill will also seek to establish the supply of naloxone via secure automatic dispensing

units. Sadly, I am not going to have enough time to talk about the many benefits that those dispensing units will have.

I really do want to spend the next bit of my time talking about how the trial will work and why drug checking is important, because this bill will provide the legislative basis to allow drug-checking services to operate within our state. The proposed Victorian model would begin with an 18-month implementation trial of a mixed service model, with mobile drug-checking services at up to 10 festivals and events as well as at a fixed site in a central location. The trial will provide benefits for those Victorians who make use of these services but will also benefit health services and policy more broadly by providing valuable information about how drug-checking services can be best utilised for our state. A drug-checking interaction would start with a discussion with a harm reduction worker before a qualified chemist uses a small sample of substance to analyse its content. Findings on the compounds detected as well as their effects and interactions would then be communicated by a health professional or a harm reduction worker. No-one will be told that their drugs are safe. However, crucial harm minimisation advice will be provided, along with the option of safe disposal.

The bill that is before the house provides a framework that will facilitate these interactions. It also clarifies the roles of those involved, including general drug-checking workers authorised to provide harm reduction advice, specialised drug-checking workers who are also trained to handle substances and drug-checking directors overseeing operations at all times. The bill also outlines the activities and requirements of drug-checking permits. These may be issued by the secretary to a fit and proper person, subject to any relevant conditions, and will allow for operation at either an identified fixed site or a mobile service, which must be suitable, sanitary and adequately equipped.

Crucially, this bill also provides a statutory exemption from liability for clients, permit-holders and certain staff. This means that clients can attend a drug-checking place and that the workers can do their jobs without fear of criminal repercussions for possession or supply. These exemptions will not extend to clients possessing trafficable quantities or those who are bound by drug-related legal obligations, including bail obligations. Furthermore, those involved in the provision of drug-checking services will be exempt from certain civil liabilities and from repercussions under codes of conduct for activities conducted in good faith under the permit.

Turning our backs on what is happening is not working. In recent years usage has shifted towards synthetic drugs, and our statistics show how fatal overdoses have grown. I commend this bill to the house.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (11:18): I rise to speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024, or, for those listening at home, the pill-testing bill. I am very grateful that I have the opportunity to stand and speak today. My community elected me to be their voice at the table, and it is great to be here to express my views on their behalf. There has been a lot of really wonderful debate over the course of the last couple of days, and debate with a rich lived-experience feeling coming through. The member for Melton did a wonderful debate, and also the member for Frankston and the member for Yan Yean. They all told of their lived experience of pill testing and the dangers and the harm, and I thank them for being brave and courageous enough to bring that here in this chamber.

I would like to assure the member for Brighton that when this bill passes it will not be a green light for drug use. I will not be running out to buy pills, nor will my wife or my children or their friends. I think that is just fearmongering, and it is a shame that you bring that to this chamber. Unfortunately, I feel from this side of the chamber the debate has been really substantial but on that side of the chamber the debate has been really disappointing. The reason that it has been disappointing is that all I heard on that side was that they have questions that have not been answered and that they are concerned about things. But the problem is they have got it wrong; they have actually got their debate wrong on this pill-testing bill.

This bill is about a trial, and the interesting thing about a trial is you go to trial because you do not have all the answers. A trial is about finding out answers to questions that we have, and then, when you find those answers, you find other questions. Rather than debate the fact that we do not know what this trial is going to do, let us start saving lives – what a great idea. Let us start saving lives. Let us go and do the trial and find out what we need to do, what changes we need to make and how we can further save lives and keep our community, our children, our friends and our brothers and sisters safe. That to me makes sense.

Pill testing or drug checking is not a new idea; it has not even been new in the last decade. Pill testing has existed in Europe since the 1990s. The UK, Canada, Netherlands and our friends across the ditch in New Zealand have conducted the practice, and also at home in the ACT and, I believe, Queensland. Is that correct?

A member interjected.

Paul MERCURIO: Incoming, good. The fact is in a perfect world no-one would take drugs, but the fact is people do take drugs and we cannot really stop them. We can scream about how dangerous they are and that they are illegal, but people do not really care about that.

James Newbury interjected.

Paul MERCURIO: That does not mean that we can just let them die in the ditch at some music festival, member for Brighton. People are prepared and will always be prepared to take the risk. They have always done that from time immemorial. The truth is, if we want to stop people taking drugs, we have got to stop drugs. Maybe that is a better idea, member for Brighton. The fact is our police forces work incredibly hard to stop illegal drugs coming into our country. Our police forces, both federal and state, work incredibly hard to stop people manufacturing illegal drugs in our state and in our country, and basically it is impossible. If it was possible, we would have done it already. There is an alternative to that, and that is that we protect and help people to make better informed decisions about whether they want to take illicit drugs or not. I am reminded that no matter how hard we work, we still have illicit and illegal drugs in jail, which you would think would be one of the easiest places to stop them. So we cannot continue to do the same thing. We have to try a different approach, and that is what this bill and, when it passes, that is what this trial will work towards. It is something different, and it will save lives.

The question is: does pill testing save lives? We have heard in this chamber way too many stories about people who have passed away from taking drugs that could have been saved. The member for Yan Yean told a story yesterday about a young girl who went to a rave, had pills in her pocket, saw a sniffer dog and, in panic and fright, took all her drugs and subsequently died. What a great idea, sniffer dogs. Let us have sniffer dogs instead of pill testing – let us not.

The fact is, as I have said, there will be people that will always take drugs. A report conducted by the ANU found that two-thirds of people who used a pill-testing service had never discussed or sought advice about their drug use with a health professional, and now, because of pill testing, they do. They are given information; they are given the opportunity to make an informed choice.

As I said, the fact is that people will always take drugs. They are not thinking about the consequences. Maybe they are overly trusting of their drug dealer or their manufacturer, or they just do not care. However, there are a percentage of people that do care, that are concerned. They know that the drugs are illegal. They are going out to have a good time, but in the back of their minds they are concerned and wondering, ‘Is this safe to take?’ We are not giving them the opportunity to find out. We are giving them the opportunity for a sniffer dog to smell their drugs and then to be sent to jail or to court or to ruin their lives. We need to change that.

I am aware too that often people will buy some drugs and take them to a party, and they might actually buy some for their friend and give them to them. I can tell you what, I certainly would not want to

have to live with the repercussions if I had bought some drugs for a good time at a rave and gave some of those drugs to my girlfriend or boyfriend or whoever and they died. I just could not imagine the horror of that.

Additionally, most festivalgoers attend with groups of friends, so if one of them has drugs, then quite likely some of their other friends have drugs, possibly from the same source, possibly not. So if one person in the group has the courage and perhaps the sanity to go and have their drugs tested and they find out that they are not what they were purported to be, they can then tell their friends, who might not go and get their drugs tested. But if one person in the group does and they find that there is something in that pill that should not be there, that it is too strong or whatever, they can tell their friends, and their friends can have the choice of whether or not they wish to take those drugs.

Dylan Wight interjected.

Paul MERCURIO: There is; it is multiplying safety. Of course the best way to prevent death is not to take drugs, but as I have said, we live in reality and people will take drugs regardless.

There are some facts that I would like people to have a look at. In 2023 the evaluation of the ACT's drug-checking service CanTEST revealed that 53 per cent of substances tested matched the expected drug – only 53 per cent. A study of English festivals found the rate of onsite medical incidents and hospitalisations from accidental drug harm is significantly lower at festivals that provide pill testing. Police and medical services in the UK attribute a 95 per cent decrease in drug-related hospital admissions to pill testing – 95 per cent.

There are a lot of other facts, but I also want to just quickly talk about how since 2021 four Victorian coroners have investigated the deaths of 10 Victorians, and they have all recommended drug-checking services. Let us think about it for a moment: 10 deaths; 20 grieving parents; 50 to 60 grieving siblings; 60 to 100 grieving extended family members; 200, 300 or 400 grieving friends from work, sporting clubs, drama groups, local church, community groups – all walks of life. Drugs do not discriminate. We need to do better.

I am really lucky my kids did not do drugs. They did not go to festivals. But I could not imagine lying awake at night wondering if they got home safe, wondering in the morning, if they are not home, if there is bad news. We need to support this bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (11:28): I thank the member for Hastings for his thoughtful and compelling contribution. I rise to also support the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024. We began this debate on Tuesday, as the Leader of the Nationals pointed out to us a little earlier, and I did therefore have the opportunity of visiting the 1st Reservoir Scout Group on Tuesday evening and chatting to them about the debate we have been having in this place. I do thank Ross Millward, Leonard and the rest of the Venturer Scouts for having us along. I can report to the chamber that this bill would have passed, not unanimously but comfortably, if it were a vote of the 1st Reservoir Scout Group. I think to the credit of that group, they did very quickly grasp the point of the bill, perhaps more so even than some opposition speakers.

Legislation is of course always about what we can do, what we must do and what we cannot do. As we know, the underlying principal act here basically bans the production and use of a range of controlled substances, but like most things it has some exceptions. The key point of the bill we are debating is to make operating a drug-checking service a permitted exemption for the purposes of what is proposed to be an 18-month trial of such a program. Separately but importantly, it also allows for the supply through vending machines of opioid antagonists, which for the time being largely means naloxone, and we have heard other speakers – I certainly appreciate the contribution of the member for Melton, who is next to me – talk on the very practical and important use of that drug. It is very welcome that its use will be expanded through the bill that is in front of us today.

But, as we have heard throughout the debate, the contentious part is the drug-checking part. A significant component of the opposition's responses concern an alleged lack of detail. I say again: legislation sets out what you can and cannot do. It does not and has never described the entire implementation of any program. I note the member for Brighton is here. We all heard speak him at some length about 12-year-olds, and in fact he repeated those points through interjections earlier. He had the opportunity to move an amendment to that effect, but he has not done that. I am sure the minister will take on board all of the questions and comments that have been raised. But I think it is important to call out –

James Newbury interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: No, member for Brighton, I think it is important to call out that I believe some members of the opposition are using questions of detail to avoid voting in favour of a bill that they would personally support because they do not wish to go back and explain to some of their more conservative branch members and voters why it is that they supported it.

James Newbury interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: Taking the interjection, I note that the member for Brunswick in his contribution raised a similar set of implementation questions. He spoke about spectrometer sensitivity and other things that the member for South-West Coast had brought up, but he did not feel the need to then vote against the bill. That is because he recognised, as the 1st Reservoir Scout Group recognised, that what we are debating here today is the broad question of whether it should be legal to run a drug-checking pilot or not. The answer to that broad question is of course yes. As the Minister for Health said the other day, we know that drug abuse is real and we know that harm caused by drugs is real, and we need to take a health-led approach to this because there are peoples' lives at stake. Or, as the Premier said even more simply in her contribution, this bill is about saving lives.

In arguing in favour of that proposition I would like to draw an analogy with road safety and follow very much the line of argument taken up by the member for Yan Yean. If we learned tomorrow that there was some magical technology that cost, say, \$50,000 and allowed you to magically take control of any vehicle with a drunk driver behind the wheel and safely drive them home, would we do it? Of course we would do it. That would be a very cost-effective way of saving in the vicinity of 75 lives every year. I can tell you right now, if such a thing happened, it would pass through this place with the full support of everyone and very little comment.

We do in many respects already do that. If you think about barriers along highways, if you think about the semi-mountable curbs that are found on the Bell Street bridge for us locally, those road design features are not there for the average driver. They are there for people who have lost control of their vehicle at high speed. Nine times out of 10 the reason they have done that is because they are acting in an unlawful or negligent matter, and no-one says of those drivers, who contribute very significantly to the road toll, 'Okay, let's get the road toll to zero, except for the people who are speeding or drink driving.' I have never heard the opposition make that argument. We have to ask ourselves why it is different for illicit drugs. Why is the idea of preventing deaths –

James Newbury interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: Driving when you are drunk, to take the interjection from the member for Brighton, or driving above the speed limit is illegal, yet we do not say that those lives do not matter. So why is it that, when it comes to illicit drugs, it is so much more controversial than the idea of –

James Newbury interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: The member for Brighton is making some trivial and exaggerated interjections. The member for Yan Yean made the point, to make the point another way, member for Brighton, that if someone is out on a boat and they do not wear a life jacket, which is unlawful, we do not refuse to send a search and rescue team to them. The reality is we save people's lives regardless of

the legality of their behaviour. That has always been the case, and as the member for Brighton knows, the reason it is different with illicit drugs is because there has always been a culture war around illicit drugs.

The member can talk all that he likes about evidence-based approaches, but the political right has always been very negatively predisposed to illegal drugs and very ungenerous in the stereotyped way they talk about drug users. And the member for Brighton will perhaps agree with me when I say that on the other hand the political left and the Greens and those further left of them have always, we know, been extremely positively predisposed, to a degree that often has gone beyond what the significant risk profile of illicit drugs would support.

I did think the member for Brunswick made a good contribution, in part because, unlike some Greens members with whom I have spoken, he did not pretend that drugs are low risk. We are in complete agreement with the member for Brighton – they are high risk – and I point out that he in fact voiced what I think are very real and serious concerns about fentanyl and synthetic opioids and other new novel drugs coming which are even more dangerous than some that are currently commonly used. Whilst I think there are some on the left who would just remove all drugs from the principal act, I think there is some credit that he recognised that we can in fact tackle these things through a combination of education campaigns, health-led responses and legal prohibitions, just as we do drink driving and other high-risk behaviours. To emphasise that point: we all recognise that making something illegal is often important. Making industrial manslaughter unlawful was important. Making it unlawful to pour several tonnes of cooking oil into Edwards Lake, which unfortunately locally someone did recently, is important to disincentivise them from doing it. Making the Nazi salute illegal and unlawful is important to disincentivise people from doing it. We agree with that. The same thing should be absolutely true for producing, using and distributing highly dangerous and illegal drugs, and we recognise the negative impacts on the community.

James Newbury interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: But as I have just set out in my contribution, we can absolutely do that, and in complete opposition to the interjections of the member for Brighton, it is possible to simultaneously use legal prohibitions and a health-led response and an education campaign.

In drawing my remarks to a conclusion, we have heard from other members – I touched in my adjournment comments on the contributions of the member for Footscray, the member for Melton and earlier from the member for Hastings – about people who have direct, lived experience of seeing an overdose victim trying to find their breath, trying to breathe again. I have been lucky in my life not to have to experience that, but I have certainly been in circumstances where people have taken pills and other illicit drugs, having obtained them from someone they had met 3 minutes earlier, and they had no idea what they were doing. I think the availability and the knowledge about the availability of the pilot program that has been set forth or allowed to act through the bill today would have been important in those circumstances. Touching on the comments that the member for Brunswick and others have made about the rise of novel synthetic opioids and benzodiazepines and other drugs like that, it is also a very timely bill to reach this chamber.

I thank the Minister for Mental Health and her team for bringing it together and the mental health division of the Department of Health, who have done a lot of work on this. I do also recognise, as other speakers have done – the member for Frankston and others – the work of Harm Reduction Victoria and other advocates who have been involved in this discussion for a long time. As I said, it is a timely bill, an important bill, and I commend it to the house.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (11:38): I am pleased to rise to speak in support of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024. I think this has been something that has been discussed in our communities for a very long time. I do want to give my thanks, appreciation and acknowledgement to the Minister for Mental Health and for work that she and her team have done

on this bill. It is really about saving lives. It is a health-led approach, and it has been done on the basis of the evidence that has been put before this government.

It is not about condoning drug use, and it is not about telling people they are good to go with taking drugs. But I think many of us in this place have heard from families and loved ones about the impact of drug use, particularly on young people who go out to have a good time, to have fun and to enjoy themselves at these festivals. Unfortunately the consequences can be dire, and either they become seriously unwell or, in a worse scenario, they pass away. I have not had the opportunity to speak to families that have had a loved one pass away under these circumstances, but I have certainly had conversations with families who have had near-miss experiences with a loved one, with their children or a sibling.

What I found is that many of those people are saying this has to happen. This is one way of protecting those young people that go to these festivals. They do not set out to intentionally harm themselves; they are just out to have a good time. I know for many families it is quite frightening. We all like to think that our kids are going to do the right thing and not take drugs, but by the same token we know that young people experiment. They are around their mates at these festivals and think, 'I'm just going to take one pill and have a great time and go home.' Unfortunately for some young people that does not happen. They do not get to go home. I think the evidence that has been before us, the expert information that has been put forward, is something that we as a government have a responsibility to take note of. I think the consequences of not doing that are dire for future events where these pills are available to young people.

As I said, it is not about condoning drug use. It is about a health-led approach, and we have seen that in our approach to the safe injecting rooms and the reasons why we put those in place. This is just another extension of that from my perspective. During the early stages of the debate, which started some years ago, I did question whether this was something we should do. But over time and from listening to those experts, listening to families and listening to young people I fully support this bill. I think we should all in this place be supporting this bill, because we never know whether it is going to be one of our children, one of my grandchildren. Importantly, we are here as a government to protect as much as we can all Victorians, and that includes young people that want to go out and have a good time.

This whole thing about encouraging young people to take pills – I do not think it is. In the discussions I have with young people they see it as being a really positive thing that they can have that pill tested but also have that education piece when they are getting that pill tested. I do not believe that there will be people encouraging them to take the pill, but they will be there to provide them with the information and support that they need to make an informed decision. If they make that decision, that is a decision of that young person to do that, but at least we know that there is some protection in place for that young person when they make those decisions. It is about providing Victorians with information to help them make more informed decisions. These are life-saving decisions that they will be making, and we will have amazing people there supporting them. I know when we have schoolies week down in the south-west in our area on the Surf Coast there are remarkable people that are out there supporting young people. Obviously pill testing is not part of that, but they are educating young people about drugs and alcohol, the impact of that when it is abused in some way and what they need to do to protect themselves. I see those amazing people out there, and I am pretty confident we will have those same amazing people at these festivals, providing that really good information to those young people.

Clearly the legislation will ensure all parties, including festival operators, pill-testing operators and their clients, will be given the confidence that nobody is breaking the law by operating or using the testing service. This is another important factor to this. Our police, who I understand are supporting this bill, have been heavily involved in the conversations around this.

I know the impact that this has on not only the families and loved ones but the paramedics who have to attend these events. I want to give them a huge shout-out for all the work that they do. All of those experts in the field are in support of this bill because they know that it can be life-saving.

Pill-testing services are much more than the test itself. Trained peer workers and technical experts will also provide clients with critical harm reduction information to reduce that risk, and the intelligence gathered from this service will strengthen Victoria's current drug surveillance efforts, helping us to get on top of dangerous trends a lot sooner. We know that no drug is ever truly safe, and that is part of this. We are not saying that it is safe to do, but we know that some young people will make the decision to take those drugs. We know they are not safe, but Victorians deserve to have all the information possible to help them make better, safer and more informed decisions.

As I said, the science behind pill testing is clear: it saves lives and reduces harm. It really is just common sense. We have listened to those experts; we have made that decision to put this forward and to have that trial, and hopefully we can put this in place before the festival season starts. That gives us an opportunity over the next 18 months to see how this is going to work and potentially save a number of lives during that process as well. This is not going to be the be-all and end-all, but it is going to start addressing some of those life-threatening situations that occur particularly at festivals, so to have this in place ready for the festival season is really important from my perspective.

I know in my community many families are very supportive of this bill. I have not had a conversation with anybody that does not agree with it. Yes, there is some hesitancy about something like this, but there always will be. When people consider this as being potentially life-saving for their children, their neighbour's children or family members, they are in full support of it. I congratulate the Minister for Mental Health for all the work that she has done, because this is really a huge reform that we need to have in place that will protect our children in Victoria and ensure a safe environment.

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (11:48): It is my pleasure to rise today and speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024. Put simply, this bill is about saving lives. The proposed bill includes provisions for implementing a trial program for drug-testing services and authorises the installation of naloxone dispensing machines to address opioid overdose cases. This will allow the operation of both stationary and mobile pill-testing services in Victoria.

The primary goal of pill testing is to save lives and change individuals' behaviour by providing them with health and safety information. As a government, we understand that whether we like it or not people will use drugs, and we also know that no drug is safe. But if people choose to take drugs, they deserve to know what is in them. Harm minimisation is so crucial and urgently needed at this time as we see the global drug market becoming more and more dangerous.

Pill testing is not a new idea. In Europe it has existed since the 1990s, with countries like the Netherlands and the United Kingdom providing pill-testing facilities to the community and at festivals for years. Services have been implemented in several countries around the world, including Canada, New Zealand and Ireland. These services include onsite and fixed-site testing. They have been successful in identifying harmful substances and saving lives.

When it comes to Australia, Victoria is not the first jurisdiction to consider pill testing as a way to minimise harm and reduce risky drug-taking behaviour. In 2018 Australia held its first pill-testing trial at the Groovin the Moo festival in Canberra and held a second trial there in 2019. Eighty-five substances were tested in 2018, and this more than doubled to 171 substances in 2019. During the 2018 trial 18 per cent of patients decided not to use illicit drugs at the festival, while 12 per cent said that they would use less of that drug.

When we compare places that have pill testing with those without it, there is not any evidence that suggests an increase in rates of drug use or mortality. In fact the evidence tells us that pill testing leads to less drug taking. The Australian Capital Territory drug-checking service, CanTEST, found that only 53 per cent of substances tested matched the expected drug. For those where an additional drug, a

different drug or an inconclusive result was found, one-third reported that they definitely would not use the drug. A study at English festivals revealed that festivals providing pill-testing services had a lower rate of onsite medical incidents and hospitalisations due to accidental drug harm compared to those that did not offer such services. At a UK festival, police and medical services attributed a 95 per cent decrease in drug-related hospital admissions to pill-testing services, indicating the potential benefits of such services in harm reduction. A 2022 study showed that a high percentage of consumers in Portugal and the UK chose not to consume the drug when test results indicated that the drug was different than expected, highlighting the impact of drug testing on consumer behaviour.

What these trials in Australia and established services across Europe clearly tell us is that when people have access to a pill-testing service, when they have more information about what is actually in drugs, they are less likely to use those drugs. Ultimately pill testing empowers individuals to make well-informed choices about their substance use. According to the 2022–23 national drug strategy household survey, an estimated 10.2 million people, or 47 per cent of people, aged 14 and over in Australia had used an illicit drug at some point in their lifetime. An estimated 3.9 million – 18 per cent of our population – had used an illicit drug in the last 12 months. According to the Australian secondary students' alcohol and drug survey in 2017, which surveyed more than 23,000 secondary school students aged between 12 and 17 years, around 4 per cent of students had reported using ecstasy, or MDMA, at some point in the last year. What this research is telling us is that Victorians, in particular young Victorians, are using illicit drugs.

These statistics are sadly all too well known across the Geelong region. The latest data from the Victorian Coroners Court has shown a concerning increase in drug overdose deaths in the Greater Geelong region. The number of overdose deaths across Geelong rose from 22 in 2022 to 27 last year, making it the highest number of fatalities in regional Victoria. Since 2014 a total of 215 people have tragically passed away due to drug overdoses in the Geelong region. A recent report from the Penington Institute indicates a 56 per cent spike in Geelong residents accidentally overdosing on drugs, from 60 in 2012–18 to 94 in 2018–22. These statistics are heartbreaking, and there is more we can do to bring them down – reduce accidental drug overdoses and prevent drug overdose deaths. That is exactly why this government is bringing this legislation to the house.

Pill testing is just one way we can reduce drug harm in our community, and the Allan Labor government is backing-in this trial with a statewide action plan to address drug harms, save lives and provide care to those in need. The plan responds to the recommendations of the Lay report and emphasises a health-led approach to reducing drug harms. It includes initiatives such as expanding access to pharmacotherapy – the use of medicines to assist in the treatment of opioid addiction – to 30 more locations across the state. This will allow up to 1500 more Victorians access to life-saving treatment. We will hold a trial of 20 naloxone vending machines alongside existing needle and syringe programs so that this completely safe medication can be more easily accessed at any time of the day to help people in a life-or-death emergency. In my local community, Barwon Health offers naloxone free from its Corio community health centre and the mental health and wellbeing hub on Moorabool Street in the Geelong CBD. The plan includes an Australian-first Never Use Alone helpline, a new helpline which will offer anonymous care and advice to individuals at risk of overdose. The purpose of this helpline is to reduce overdose risk and assist emergency services to respond faster if needed.

In partnership with Cohealth we are establishing a dedicated community health hub in the Melbourne CBD. This hub will offer comprehensive health and social support services to the Melbourne CBD community, and when it opens in 2026 the hub will be a gateway for wraparound health and social support services and provide comprehensive case management for those most vulnerable. In addition to the hub, the plan also delivers wraparound services at the Salvation Army centre on Bourke Street, which provides medical, nursing and mental health support. Delivery will commence as soon as possible in 2024. The plan will boost Cohealth street teams in the CBD and expand street outreach to two other Melbourne locations. The plan also includes the appointment of Victoria's first chief addiction adviser within the state's health system and the development of Victoria's long-term strategy

to address alcohol and other drug harms. This will ensure that we continue to do all that we can to reduce drug use, minimise harm and save lives.

This bill will make amendments to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to allow for the introduction of a drug-checking trial with protections for the service, its staff and its clients. The possession and supply of illicit drugs will not be decriminalised outside the service, and police powers will remain the same. Victoria will continue to consult with police and other authorities to establish a fair and feasible arrangement that does not deter people from using the service. Close collaboration with Victoria Police has been ongoing to ensure the right balance between holding drug dealers accountable and not deterring people from using the service.

Pill testing provides people with the opportunity to understand the risks of drug use and emphasises the importance of harm minimisation approaches. It is practical, realistic and proven to be effective both in Australia and overseas, because we know that drug use is dangerous but information is powerful. This bill seeks to save lives, reduce drug harm and improve public health while also aiming to reduce pressures on Victoria's frontline services. I would like to congratulate the Minister for Mental Health for all of her work in putting together this important bill. I am proud to support the bill, and I wish it a speedy passage.

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (11:57): I rise to make a brief contribution on this bill, which is inherently about pill testing. The Premier has said that it has taken her some time to come to the position that she has come to on this, and I am likewise. I can remember having a conversation with the member for Glen Waverley a couple of years ago on this very topic. He and I were not vastly apart, but we were on different sides of the argument. But I have also come round to supporting the concept, and I support this bill.

As I have mentioned before, I was lucky enough to grow up in a pharmacy. I think I and the member for Wendouree share the luxury of having had a father who was a pharmacist. I was surrounded by drugs – legal ones – the use of drugs and the prescribing of drugs, and that was my childhood. My father, although very conservative – I do not know where he would sit on this; I have got a feeling he would actually sit with the bill, but I will not speak for him, because he is not here anymore – was one of the early adopters of the methadone program in the pharmacy. It is not quite the same, obviously, but in a sense the methadone program is a harm reduction measure. You are still providing a drug to the person who is the addict but hopefully doing it in a more controlled circumstance that will allow them to, in this case with heroin, get off it. As an aside – I think the Pharmacy Guild of Australia might agree with me here; a shout-out to Anthony Tassone and the crew – it would be nice if the federal government added a little bit of money to the pharmacists who still do the methadone program. It essentially becomes a cost to the business because there is not enough incentive to actually do it. So all the pharmacists who do the methadone program do it pretty much out of their goodwill and humanitarian spirit, so a shout-out to all those pharmacists who do.

The complexity of this issue is that it is almost like holding two contrary views at the same time, which I have heard is a sign of intelligence. I am not going to put forward that I have that, but I will say on the one hand we have illegal drugs that most of us in this house would agree are rightfully illegal. The sale of them is illegal. The procurement of them is illegal. On the carrying of them, we tend to walk away from the illegality and the criminality, especially in personal quantities, and we do that because we understand that there are problems involved with people who take drugs. In the case of pills and especially party-related pills that we are mostly talking about, we do not want to condone the use of them, and I do not think anyone in this house that I have heard is condoning the use of drugs.

But we are naive if we do not accept that the use is common amongst some people, and those people tend to be young. I was young once – it has been a while – and I did some stupid things when I was young, not too stupid thankfully, but we all make mistakes. I have three kids, like other people in this house have children. What brings me to supporting this concept, this bill and the state moving forward on this – and I thank the Premier for leading on this – and what brings me to the decision is that in

essence the awkwardness of this topic is because of the illegality of the substance. The way forward is to lessen the harm, because we know the harm will continue. This bill will not prevent every mistake by a young person. This bill will not prevent every loss of life in tragedy or some of the tragedies we have heard about from members on both sides, but it will lessen them.

Taking a pill, testing it, knowing that it is incredibly harmful and telling the public that it is incredibly harmful is not condoning the use, the sale, the procurement or the trafficking, but it is a way of us saying, 'Be aware of what you're about to do.' The responsibility is still on the person who is about to take the substance, but we as a state are in a position where we can say to people, 'Seriously, do not do this. We've seen what you're about to consider taking, and it is going to be very, very bad for you. Don't do it.' I ask people who may be conflicted as I was to imagine standing outside a mall talking to a family who have just lost a young person and saying, 'We had a chance that we might have been able to warn your child. But it was a bit awkward, we were a bit conflicted and it was too complicated.'

We need to have protections around this, and we can debate the finer points and regulations. None of the laws that we make in this state will stay exactly the same forever. The law is a moving feast. But moving in this direction is undoubtedly going to save a life – a quality of life. It might be my kids. It might not be my kids. It does not matter whose kids. What matters is that we have a chance to accept the awkwardness, to accept the complexity, to take it on and be accountable for that and warn people who are about to make a very big mistake what the consequences are and that maybe they should not do it at the time that they are about to do it. That does not mean that we stop telling our young people that, to quote *South Park*, 'Drugs are bad, mkay?' It does not mean that we stop telling people that they should stay away from drugs. We still do that. We continue to do that. But at the time that they are about to make that mistake, which may be the last one they ever make, we have a chance to tell them, 'Don't do this one. This one will be your last.' I commend the bill.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (12:05): I too rise to speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024. I understand that I am the last speaker on this bill. There have been many speakers from all sides who have had a chance to speak on this bill. I think it has probably been reflective of the debate, the number of speakers that have wished to contribute about how important this reform is and how vexed it is in many ways, as the member for Ashwood said.

I just want to reflect briefly on a couple of outstanding contributions that have been made through the course of the debate. I see the member for Melton here who spoke about his life experience and treating people who had come to harm, as well as the member for Frankston with his outstanding contribution. I also want to shout out to the member for Footscray and just reflect on what a wonderful human being she is. She is a wonderful human being anyway, but the instance that she described about coming across an individual who was obviously under the influence of drugs at the time and stopping and making sure that help came – let us hope, as the member for Melton said in response, that that young person did survive. But there is one certainty and that is if not for the actions of the member for Footscray and her friends, the outcome would have been far, far worse.

I think we have to reflect on that when we are debating this bill. This is about a harm minimisation response. It is about a health-led response to the recognition that there will be individuals, particularly young individuals, who want to take illicit substances for a variety of reasons. It is critical that we have supports in place for them to be able to make better decisions. Those supports should also be about informing them that all illicit drugs are dangerous. And that is part of the recognition; we are not denying the danger of the illicit drugs.

I am also reflecting on the comment that the member for Morwell made in his contribution. If I understood correctly, he was concerned that because the technology would not be able to provide an absolute guarantee about every single percentage of what is actually in the substance, then it was not a trial that we should be proceeding with. I feel that the only guarantee and the only certainty is that if you do not have pill testing, you can absolutely guarantee that 100 per cent of what you are taking is

unknown. We do not want to see more stories of young people overdosing or taking substances that have been cooked up in some factory that are going to end their lives.

If this pill testing can help provide more information, even if it is not going to be the complete information – even if you are told, ‘Well, it’s 25 per cent, and we don’t even know what that 25 per cent includes’ – I hope that that will be a warning sign to those individuals to say, ‘Well, maybe you’re not actually taking what you think you’re taking, and maybe you should have a second thought about the substances that you’re ingesting.’ That is exactly the intention of the pill-testing program to be implemented, so that, through education and a health-led response, young people, people who are wanting to experiment with these drugs, can be better educated and can make more informed decisions.

We have to be cognisant that drug taking does exist in our society, and we have to face certain realities. If we are to be outcome-driven, our outcome must always be about saving lives and educating people about the dangers. But strict prohibition and enforcement, as we heard from the member for Yan Yean in her story, and having a sniffer dog only response is not going to lead to a better health outcome, and it is not going to lead to a better outcome for the people who are taking these drugs.

We know that the contents that are finding their way into recreational drugs these days can be extremely potent, often many times the potency of traditional synthetic substances, and there has been an increase in drug-related emergency department admissions. The call for access to drug checking and pill testing is backed by experts locally and abroad, and as many members have said, it is not a new thing; it is something that has been around for decades, particularly over in Europe. Local and international experience has shown that drug checking is an effective public health intervention that does not increase or encourage illicit drug use.

In terms of the bill itself, this bill will give the legal authority to establish both fixed and mobile pill-testing services in Victoria. It will start with an 18-month implementation trial from the end of this year to authorise, appoint and regulate both fixed and mobile pill-testing services. By mid next year the trial also will see the establishment of a fixed-site service in a central Melbourne location close to the night-life precincts and public transport.

As I said, the key drivers for implementing this service are harm reduction and education. Without having this additional program I think we as a state would be in a far weaker place to try and deal with this issue, particularly through an education lens, and ensure that we will, at the end of the day, save more lives.

In closing, it is important that we have this pill-testing information. By providing this information to the people who bring the drugs to the pill-testing unit, they will be able to make better informed decisions, and hopefully that will change their lives for ever.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (12:15): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:

That this bill be now read a second time.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:16): I rise to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. I think it needs to be put on the record at the very outset that the

Parliament will only be allowed an opportunity to debate this bill for just over 2 hours. Despite a whole parliamentary week, the government has narrowed the debate on this bill to just over 2 hours. The reason they have done that is because this is in effect an omnibus bill and most of the measures in this bill would be supported entirely by every member, I am sure, in this place. I will mention some of them in passing as I speak. Most of the measures in this bill are part of a routine omnibus bill change to current legislation in relation to building and planning in this state. These bills are not uncommon, and most of those measures would be entirely supported by this chamber.

But what the government has done in this omnibus bill is slip in a sneaky head of power to ban gas in Victorian homes. We have an omnibus bill which is for the most part fair and reasonable and includes measures that should and would be supported, but they have tapped into that to hide a very, very concerning measure to ban gas in people's homes. They have done it separately to the normal process of doing so. Normally you would think they would bring a bill into this place to explain why they are banning gas for Victorians, but instead they have slipped it sneakily into a bill about a lot of other things that are innocuous, probably hoping that Victorians would not even notice, that no-one would notice what is in this bill. They hoped that no Victorian will pick up the bill and flick through it and delve deeply, right down deeply, into the bill to find the head of power which allows a total ban of gas in Victorian homes.

Every Victorian should be scared by this power. I think it is very, very concerning. You should have the right to gas in your home. Of course you should. We saw in the recent blackout, when half a million homes lost power, that the only access to energy they had was gas. They still had access to gas. Victorians should have access to a secure energy supply, yet what this bill has is a very concerning power, that is being snuck into what would be a non-contentious bill, to ban gas. That is why I move, on behalf of the coalition, an amendment:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this bill be withdrawn and redrafted following stakeholder consultation on the impact of the gas ban, while ensuring the other changes in the bill are retained.'

This makes clear that the coalition does not have an issue with most of the measures in this bill; they are entirely not controversial. But we will not support a bill that sneakily bans gas on the way through. I mean, seriously, can you believe that the government have so little courage on their policy decisions that they are now trying to sneak their decisions through this Parliament, hoping that no members of this place will notice the gas ban in this otherwise innocuous bill – that no-one will actually notice? They have slipped it deep in the bill. I am sure there are members on that side of the chamber who did not even know there was a gas ban in the bill. I am sure they are now shocked to hear about it, because I feel certain that in their caucus they would not have been briefed on the gas ban. They would have kept that secret from their colleagues. I cannot imagine the Minister for Energy and Resources –

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: I pick up the member for Mordialloc's interjection. He said that in caucus he was talking about me instead of talking about the gas ban. Can you believe it? How embarrassing to talk about me over the government's gas ban. That shows you the priorities of this government. They have just been revealed, haven't they? They have just been revealed: talking about rank politics over a gas ban. That is why, instead of talking about the important policy issues of the state, they are talking about rank politics.

But Victorians can see it, and you can see it in the community sentiment in relation to gas. I refer to the firm that I never refer to by name, but I will in this instance, considering who is in the chamber: RedBridge communications, RedBridge communications. I might mention them a third time. RedBridge recently found there had been a decline in support, a collapse in support – like support for the government, by the way – for the government's ban on gas. There is now net support for a gas ban at -29. The only number close to that is 30, which is the Premier's popularity rating. What is worse, as reported, critically the support amongst Labor voters has collapsed. Is there any wonder why as soon

as that poll was announced the Premier stood up to say, straight after the policy was announced, ‘Victorians can keep cooking with gas.’ Is there any wonder why a Premier who stands for nothing except green-lighting illicit drugs and trying to con Victorians into believing that she somehow is now a convert to gas –

Juliana Addison: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I do not know what the previous bill has to do with this, so: relevance.

James NEWBURY: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I was referring specifically to the Premier’s comments on this bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham): I will make a ruling on the point of order. The member did stray a little bit. I will ask the member to come back to the bill and continue with the debate.

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: I do not feel the protection of the Chair right now, Acting Speaker. What this bill does is ban gas; that is what this bill does. Further to that, the other measures in this bill, as I mentioned, are entirely supported by the coalition. For example, the matters around building orders being able to be made in an extended way, if I can put it that way rather than being technical –

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: To help the member for Mordialloc, to extend the way that building orders are made is important, because we know the system is not currently working. We know it is not working, because we have seen horrible, horrible instances of home owners who have been caught out putting their hard-earned money into properties or building properties, and they have, frankly, been ripped off and left in some cases with hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs to try and repair works that were in no way their fault, because insurance did not cover them. Of course we support that measure.

VCAT limitation periods are being extended. Of course we support that measure, because it is important that we not put a cap on a timeline where it is appropriate that those who suffer have a justifiable case and the only thing that stops them from mounting that case is an arbitrary timeline. Of course we support that measure. The architects registration regime is a simple change in relation to timing of registration, and the peak body in the area has no issue with the regime change. Of course we support that measure.

There are also changes in relation to neighbours having access to the contact details of their neighbour, where building works are occurring, so that there can be communication. The coalition throughout the process of this bill being considered has spoken with the government and the department in a constructive way and spoken about the importance of communication being free between those two parties but at the same time ensuring there are protections, because there should be protections. You need to ensure that those contact details cannot be misused, or the requests for them cannot be under the guise of something else and misused and it gives people the right to contact details where they should not have or would misuse them. The coalition has received assurances from the government that when those processes are put in place there will be adequate protections – for example, perhaps a statutory declaration – so that there is an assurance that people are protected from misuse. Or people will have to show a building permit, for example, or a building plan – something that justifies the request, again a measure that the coalition supports.

But in addition to those measures there is this gas ban in the bill, and the gas ban is an extraordinary measure at clause 38. What it does, this clause 38, is put into legislation a head of power that allows regulations to be made. What that means is this law will allow the government to make expanded laws that allow for the prohibition of gas in existing buildings or buildings under construction, buildings in a class of existing building or a class of building under construction, so defined. It also adds a

prohibition on the tradesperson from conducting that work, so it effectively creates a head of power that will allow two new prohibitions both to the home owner and to the tradesperson. But what is so scary about these new heads of power is that there are no details. What this bill says is, 'We will deal with this by way of regulation.'

When the government introduced this bill they said that this power was in aid of their gas road map. However, the power in this bill in no way aligns with that road map. The road map sets out timelines and timeframes around, in the government's mind – they are wrong – the future of gas. What this does is give total unfettered power to prohibit gas. When the minister says this new power is in line with their road map, it is not true. The legislation does not do that. There is no cap. There is no limit to what this power could potentially do. What this law says is, 'We will deal with this by regulation,' which effectively means off book, outside Parliament. We know what the government's plan is because they said it in the second-reading speech. The minister said the plan is to transition away from relying on fossil gas to power our homes and businesses, full stop. We know what the minister's plan is: to transition away, not on certain homes, on all homes. Read the sentences in the second-reading speech that the minister tabled. We know what the minister's plan is, which is why the power in this bill has no limits.

When I asked simple questions throughout the consultation process with the government on this bill around what the caps and what the limits around this power will be, the government refused to provide any limit. In fact they would not even guarantee that the power use would be limited to the substitution road map. Despite saying in the speech that this power has something to do with the substitution road map, we know that it does not. In addition, this bill will allow two new prohibitions to be created, two new bans in law from behaviour, but the other thing the government will not reveal is what the penalties will be. The coalition sought to understand what the penalties would be. How much trouble would someone get in for trying to connect gas at their home? The government will not tell anyone. They will not tell Victorians. Not only is there a ban, but they will not tell you yet how much you are going to be punished for doing it. They will not tell tradespeople how much they will be punished for trying to connect. They will simply introduce with this bill a blanket ban and then say, 'We'll deal with this off book, outside Parliament.'

No-one trusts this government when it comes to the gas ban, and you can see it in the recent Redbridge poll. I am not a huge fan of polls, let alone Redbridge, but in this instance I point to that because Victorians now know what the government's plans are. It is very, very concerning because at the end of the day we are dealing with Victorians having secure, reliable and affordable energy, and gas must be part of that mix. As has been pointed out by industry, the truth is, as the Australian Industry Group's chief executive recently said, that this government has spent the last decade 'demonising gas as a legitimate energy source'. That is true, and we know it is true. I quote further:

It may be that having been warned by energy regulators that it faces a strong risk of blackouts in the years ahead as well as seeing significant parts of its industrial base at risk, the Victorian government has realised that misguided ideological intransigence has real-world consequences.

We know that to be true. It is deeply concerning that the government has been waging a war on gas, and this bill just takes that war one step further in banning people from gas in their homes.

We have seen when it comes to this bill, as I mentioned earlier, soon after polling was released in relation to community support for gas, the Premier's new-found interest in gas and her public comments: 'Oh, no, no. No, no, no, no, we don't have a problem with gas. No, no, no, you're still allowed to cook with gas.' We saw those comments very soon after that polling. But only when it comes to cooktops did the Premier give that commitment. When it comes to hot water, no. When it comes to anything else a household does or uses gas for, no – the Premier just said when it comes to cooktops. The Premier was called out only two days after saying that Victorians can continue to cook with gas, when she approved this bill being introduced into the Parliament.

Two days after the Premier stood up and said, 'I like gas now. Actually, everyone stop worrying about my gas bans. I think it's okay,' she introduced a sneaky bill into this place to ban gas in people's homes. I mean, talk about talking out of both sides of your mouth: 'I support gas. I'm going to ban it, but I'm going to sneak it through.' That is what the Premier is trying to do today – to sneak through a ban, and not only sneak it through but stop the Parliament debating it. There will only be 2 hours of debate on this bill. We saw earlier the government packing their speakers list to stop any debate on this bill. This debate started after 12 o'clock. The whole morning was filled with the government packing their speakers on the previous bill because they did not want to allow any opportunity for debate on this bill.

When the bill was introduced you could see what industry thought of it. I refer to Seeley International managing director Jon Seeley, who said in relation to the Premier's announcement:

Today's announcement is a cynical political exercise, an attempt to defuse widespread community discontent with their illogical anti-gas policies without making any substantive concessions ... Half the energy used by Victorian homes is gas for cooking, heating and hot water, which creates less emissions than switching to coal-fired electricity. Of the common household uses of gas, cooking would be the smallest, and also the most emotive for many community groups.

Telling taxpayers (to) keep cooking with gas but ignoring the fundamental flaw in ... pushing households to electrify everything else makes no sense except from a political perspective.

He has hit the nail on the head, hasn't he – 'from a political perspective'. That is why the Premier came out and made the comment in relation to gas and was caught only two days later.

What is worse is the government did not even talk to industry. You look at comments from Ross Jamieson from the Gas Appliance Manufacturers Association of Australia, who said that any thoughts of consultation were completely baseless and 'We've had no meaningful discussions with the government this year at all.' You can just imagine, can't you, the gas appliance manufacturers trying to knock on the door of the Minister for Energy and Resources. Can you imagine –

Danny O'Brien interjected.

James NEWBURY: It would be a cold day, wouldn't it? It would be cold day. You would be sitting outside that office for a very long time. I am sure that you would not get entry into that office.

For the association to say that the government has not spoken to them this year is astonishing. Is there any wonder that you have had the federal government, the federal minister and the Deputy Premier in this place call out the minister for energy's behaviour? Is there any wonder that the Deputy Premier has made it very, very clear that he is cooking with gas at home? He said something about gas, and I think he did it because he knows the government has gone down the wrong path. But what will be interesting later is to see how he votes. That is all very well and good, and I give him some credit for calling out the minister for energy. But he will have an opportunity to vote later today, so it will not just be his words – it will be the character of his conviction on display. I would say that I would hope that he would not only speak to his views but that he actually votes against the ban. If he is allowed to cook with gas, why would he allow the government to ban others from doing the same? Words matter, and he has the opportunity to do that later today.

The other thing that is worth speaking to in relation to this bill is the minister's second-reading speech. The second-reading speech went to Victoria's housing statement, some of which the government has forgotten about, including the commitment to build 80,000 homes each and every year over the next 10 years. We know that in the last year they built 51,000 and this year that is projected to fall to 45,000. Only Labor could announce that they will increase the number of homes being built and that number go backwards as a result of their statement. Only Labor could manage that one. It is frankly because they do not understand what they are doing and the housing statement was basically a raft of new taxes. 'Industry, why don't you build new homes?' And what we will do as a result is we will tax you into doing it. What that was about was the former premier wanting to announce something on the way out. We know from little birdies in the department that the former premier was given a draft housing

statement that suggested the government commit to 60,000 homes every year, but the Premier, because he was on his way out, said, 'I want to commit to 80,000.'

Paul Mercurio: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I believe the member has strayed from the content of the bill.

James NEWBURY: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the member may wish to read the second-reading speech of the minister. The minister quite clearly, in detail, speaks to Victoria's housing statement at page 4 of the second-reading speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham): The member was being relevant.

James NEWBURY: Victoria's housing statement, some of which has been forgotten, will become a key focus for Victorians over coming months. You are starting to see across this state big groups of the community forming to come together in forums – big, big groups – saying they are concerned about the measures in these bills. We spoke about it in question time yesterday. In the Deputy Premier's seat hundreds of residents will be coming together on Sunday. They have invited me as the shadow minister and the Leader of the Opposition to come to the Deputy Premier's seat to talk about their concerns about a major activity centre plan with a minimum four-storey requirement. For effectively a 1-kilometre circumference you will have to build a minimum four storeys.

We know that in the other activity centres there will be a standing right for six storeys in suburban streets – six storeys.

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: I hear the members from the other side talking about the fact that their areas do not have any of these announced plans. I am so glad that the members think it is something to boast about that Labor has chosen not to pick their seats for development. And we know when it comes to the minister, the minister has form, because the minister who is approving these things is on the record for opposing development in her seat. The minister is opposed to development in her own seat – and in one instance opposed a 10-storey development and a three-storey development – but is happy to approve 20 storeys in everyone else's. That just tells you the type of character.

When it comes to this bill, the coalition support most of the measures, but we will not support this gas ban, and neither will Victorians. The Premier has been caught, the Premier has been seen and so has the Labor Party, and Victorians will not accept it.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (12:46): I just have to pause. I do not need to reflect. I have got a shocking headache, and I feel like I need a cup of tea. It is coming close to a break for lunch. What I will say is that what I took away from the member for Brighton's contribution, a theatrical performance which always puts such a great smile on my face – what would we do without you, member for Brighton? You are so far from Labor's worst nightmare it is not funny. But in good jest, what I took away from that is that the member for Brighton is the household cook in his family, and he is freaking out about not having gas on his stovetop. There are other options, member for Brighton. Just because there have been a few invitations from those opposite this week, I would love to have the member for Brighton over to my house and have a little bit of a cook-off. We could cook with many different appliances. I am someone who dabbles in a little bit of gas cooktop; I have got a gas cooktop, which is soon going to change, in the coming months, by the way.

Members interjecting.

Sarah CONNOLLY: It could lock in my preselection doing that, if members get to meet the member for Brighton. What I will say is, as the member for Tarneit kindly pointed out yesterday: cook with a bloody air fryer. Come to my place, member for Brighton, whether it is in coming weeks when I will have a gas cooktop or in coming months when I will have induction. We can cook many things. We can cook your favourite meal.

There is a really funny story about me cooking with gas. You may not know, member for Brighton, that I grew up and spent many decades in New South Wales. I have even been known to live in the ACT. Let me tell you, when I arrived in Victoria and in our first rental in Melbourne's west, we had a gas cooktop. I did not know how to use it. I did not know how to switch it on. I used to burn things all the time. It is a common New South Wales problem and a common thing in Queensland, where I have spent a lot of time. In Queensland we did not have heating, if we needed heating, by gas; we used air conditioners and reverse-cycle air conditioning, which was cheaper, and it kept you really cool in summer, which you needed up north.

My point in telling you about when I arrived here in this state and did not know how to use the cooktop is that I learned. The sky did not fall in. I learned how to cook with gas. I use many different appliances. My favourite appliance that I have had for 11 wonderful years is my Thermomix – my Thermie. I love my Thermie – and she ain't working on gas, people. That is why I understood her perfectly when I brought her along with me in my move to Victoria. We have cooked together many times, many things, because I could not work out how to use gas here in this state. But like I said, I learned. You learn something new every day, and when you have to cook every day, you learn quickly. You make mistakes, but you learn how to use it.

That is what will happen with induction. It is not the end of the world for people that are moving into new builds that cannot cook with gas. They will cook with induction. In fact they are building here in this state now knowing they are going to cook with induction. And many of those people who are building their new homes do not live a couple of hundred metres from Brighton Village; they live out in my patch in the outer western suburbs, on the outer fringes of Melbourne. That is where they are moving. They are not moving into inner Melbourne. I do not think that they are having this huge debate or this massive meltdown about their cooktop.

Belinda Wilson interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: They are so excited – that is right – to move into their new home. How will they cook? They will deal with it. They might have cooked with gas their whole life, like many Victorians. And there are many people who have not spent their entire life here in Victoria moving to the outer burbs, do I have to say, and they too deserve a voice. They will cook with what they have got in their house, and it will probably be with induction. If there are people listening to this, I would also suggest you get yourself a Thermomix, because they are really good to cook with as well.

Belinda Wilson interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: Air fryer, as the member says. I do like a bit of air frying. But the hysteria that the member for Brighton has made in his contribution about gas and banning gas fails to recognise some pretty significant fundamentals when it comes to gas here in this state. In the past what Victorians all knew around the state is that Victoria had heaps of it, and they used a lot of it. But what we know now is that it is depleting and it is depleting fast, and it is one of the biggest contributing factors as to why people's utility bills are skyrocketing through the roof. Those people, particularly out my way, know this down to a tee. I have gone and visited, and we have talked about gas and induction and all these kinds of things. They tell me they are saving so much money on their electricity and gas bills by being all electric, having participated in our Solar Homes program, having solar panels on their rooftop, having a battery in their garage that they are connecting their electric vehicle to and changing up their hot-water system. They are saving not hundreds but thousands.

When I had the Premier out a couple of months ago to a home in Williams Landing we had a great chat about their Tesla electric vehicle. I have never been inside one, let alone driven one, but I was watching it charge up connected to the battery in their garage. They talked to the Premier and also the minister about the amount of money they were saving, and it was quite detailed. They listed this all out, and I am really hoping they did not just do it for the Premier's visit. But they checked their bills every time they came through, and they were saving thousands. The first thing that the Premier said

to them is, 'What are you going to do with the money? Are you going to go on a holiday?' They had saved so much money they were considering going on a major family holiday.

This is the stuff that matters, and on this side of the house, when we go out and talk to folks in our community about cost of living, about the environment and about tackling climate change and taking real action, these are the sorts of conversations we are having with people. It is not this emotional, hysterical meltdown about 'I can no longer cook with gas. Oh, my God, how will I cook with induction?' People will learn. They will learn, and they will adapt to the change. They will enjoy more money in their hip pocket at the end of every single week; we can guarantee them that. They will also be making a significant contribution to tackling climate change here in this state. These are the sorts of things that this bill – and it may to some seem like a small bill or a bill that gets them really riled up – is doing, and this is why it is before the house this week. It is something really important. It is another bill that is going towards having better building legislative regulation. It is also another bill that is coming through the house to then help us tackle things like climate change and getting to zero emissions by the dates that we have now set. This is the stuff that really matters.

The member for Brighton's contribution – I really wish his community could hear him. I really wish that the young people at school in his community could hear him. The next generation, dare I say, of people standing there cooking meals for themselves and their family as they continue to grow – are they going to be having a meltdown and thinking about all of the things they have been ripped off by in life, gas being one of them? No, they are not. Those kinds of sentiments, those kinds of arguments are absolutely ridiculous. Many on this side would say it is scaremongering, it is false information, it is completely misleading. To me, it is completely out of touch with what the broad greater Victorian community is thinking and feeling – and indeed Australia – which is exactly why time and time again when they bring these sentiments to elections they continue to lose.

This bill has so many other things that form part of it, and I really congratulate the minister on bringing this bill to the house this week. Again, it is great legislative reform, reform that our government is now renowned for having done, and that is because we are continually introducing legislation into this place that is all about making Victoria a fairer, more equitable, more inclusive state. I am really excited to think that in decades to come we might be leading the nation, having taken to induction like ducks to water. I have no doubt that we will be. Victorians are smarter than that. I commend the bill to the house.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:56): I am pleased to rise to say a few words on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024 before we break for lunch. I must express my disappointment at the member for Laverton inviting her good friend the member for Brighton over to cook with her. She has forgotten all her Public Accounts and Estimates Committee mates already, obviously. Perhaps it is a reflection of the fact that we already spend enough time with each other in PAEC and she is sick of me. But anyway, I would be cooking with gas too, member for Laverton, if I was inviting anyone over, and I am very proud to do so.

I will come to the gas issues in a moment, but there are other elements of the bill that are not related to that – in fact quite substantive elements of this bill. It provides provisions relating to building surveyors serving building notices. It provides clarification on bringing building and plumbing actions under the Building Act 1993, it establishes a new scheme under the Architects Act 1991 with respect to registered architects annually renewing their registration and it makes a number of further miscellaneous and technical amendments to the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991 and the Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017.

But I really want to talk about the gas issues, which are a small part of the bill but an absolutely central part of the policy being put forward by the government here. It is for the reason that we have concern about these gas elements that the member for Brighton has moved a reasoned amendment, and it is one that I support. Effectively, that reasoned amendment says we have no issue with the other parts of the bill that I have mentioned, but we have a strong objection to the government's legislation to

actually try and ban people from connecting to gas under regulations. That is what this bill will do if passed.

We are not sure sometimes whether the government knows what it is talking about. They have been very successful in getting the *Herald Sun* to run a front-page story that we can keep cooking with gas, but it soon emerged that in fact that was not really the case; the backflip was only a half-pike, and not even that. So the government remains conflicted on this. Anyone who has paid any attention knows that the Minister for Energy and Resources has had to change her language in the last 12 months or so. Gas was a great evil not that long ago, but suddenly we are acknowledging that it will be part of the transition in the energy system. It is quite strange that we have got this bill this week giving the government a head of power to ban gas connections in residential homes and businesses and yet yesterday we debated a bill that will increase storage opportunities for gas. That must have hurt when the minister had to introduce that one. It is a sensible piece of legislation and we are supporting it; this one not so much, and I will be supporting the reasoned amendment.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:02 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery Dr Byreddy Shabari, member of Parliament from India, for Nandyal constituency in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Welcome.

Members

Minister for Transport Infrastructure

Absence

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I rise to inform the house that for the purposes of question time today the Treasurer will answer questions for the portfolios of Assistant Treasurer and WorkSafe and the TAC, and the Minister for Public and Active Transport will answer questions for the portfolios of transport infrastructure and the Suburban Rail Loop.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

State forest access

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:03): My question is to the Premier. In August the Premier said:

... I will never put a padlock on our public forest. It's not who I am ... it's not what I believe.

But on Tuesday the government stated it will introduce legislation next month to convert two state forests into national parks. Why is the Labor Party padlocking our state forests?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:03): I am absolutely delighted to answer this question from the member for Brighton, because it is a bit of a pattern that has emerged this week. If those opposite were not so focused on court cases and affidavits –

John Pesutto interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: Court cases? I can keep saying it: court cases, witness box, court case, witness box.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the only person who has been caught is the Premier.

Ben Carroll: On the point of order, Speaker, also on relevance, the preamble of the question mentioned padlocks, and the Premier was right to go to court cases.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! When the house comes to order I will ask the Premier to come back to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: The reason why I was referring to some of those opposite who have been distracted on other matters is because I want to take the clock back to 2019, and do you know what happened in 2019? Maybe the member for Brighton was off doing other business. Maybe he was having a bit of a dream about his future – who knows. But what was happening in 2019 was of course that VEAC, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, was undertaking a public process, and maybe the member for Brighton missed that. Maybe he missed that while he was busy doing other things. That 2019 process was an extensive process – a lot of consultation. The reason why I know this is because parts of my community were also under investigation as part of that process. There were public forums and submissions were called for, and then in 2021 that process concluded and provided the details that form the basis of the legislation that is coming into the Parliament. Do you know what is part of that legislation, because there was that extensive process, because we listened to all parts of the community? I know those opposite have a problem –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: Well, Leader of the National Party, I really should come and talk to you about what the Liberals think about, because I know you are finding it hard this week as well.

What came from the conclusion of that process is that outdoor recreation activities will still happen in these new parks. We did that. That is because we undertook a process and understood that Victoria has a fantastic great outdoors. Yes, we want to preserve and protect those elements that should be preserved and protected, but still activities like horseriding and dog walking –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question was about the Julia Gillard-style broken promise.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Manager of Opposition Business, I ask you to raise your points of order in the appropriate manner.

Jacinta ALLAN: In case the member for Brighton is concerned, seasonal hunting will still be allowed in the Wombat–Lerderderg National Park. I know that is not an activity you support, but this is a consequence of listening to the community and absolutely recognising that our great outdoors should be loved by all Victorians.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask members to cease interjecting over the top of members on their feet.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:08): Why has the Premier said one thing in regional Victoria and another in inner-city Melbourne?

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Brighton to rephrase his question so it is actually relevant to the primary question.

James NEWBURY: When it comes to the Premier's broken national park promise, why has the Premier said one thing in regional Victoria and another in inner-city Melbourne?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:09): Again, you just cannot trust a word that comes from those opposite, can you.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: I will not tolerate this level of interjection.

Jacinta ALLAN: We know they do not trust each other. We have seen that play out for week upon week. But it gets even worse than that –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Rowville is warned.

Kim Wells interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Rowville, are you reflecting on the Chair?

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: I have just made it clear, in my previous answer, that all the activities that will be able to be continued demonstrate that Victorians can continue to enjoy the great outdoors. What is also clear from this line of questioning is that you cannot trust those opposite to say the truth in this house and to say the truth to Victorians, and they most certainly do not trust each other.

Ministers statements: Victorian Honour Roll of Women

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Jobs and Industry, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Women) (14:10): The Allan Labor government continues to support, believe in and celebrate the contributions of Victorian women. Last night we inducted another 21 women onto the Victorian honour roll – outstanding women like Julie Andrews, a leading Aboriginal Victorian scholar, world-renowned for her work; Judy Small, who not only forged a path for women on the Supreme Court but was also an accomplished outstanding folk singer who released 12 albums; and local champion Fartun Farah, who established the East African Women’s Foundation, bringing together Somali-speaking women from across Melbourne and advocating for them.

It was an absolute joy to be there last night, and it was a joy because, unlike those opposite, this side of the house respects women. We hear women and their contributions. We do not shout at them with profanities.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, this government could not protect women from the Labor MPs in creep corner, and on relevance I would ask you to bring the minister back to being relevant.

The SPEAKER: There is not a point of order. I ask members to state their point of order at the commencement of the point of order. It is not an opportunity to make a statement to the house.

Natalie HUTCHINS: This year also we are celebrating 30 years of affirmative action on this side of the house. I know that this term is probably unfamiliar to those opposite, but let me explain it like you would explain it to a child perhaps. Affirmative action is the reason we have more women on our front bench than you have in your entire party room. More than half of our caucus room are Victorian Labor women, and 65 per cent of our cabinet table is made up of women.

I congratulate Victoria’s newest inductees to the honour roll. I cannot wait to see more women added to the 750 women on that roll. That roll has been going for 23 years. It will continue on. We will continue to value women’s roles in this house and achievements outside.

Melbourne Market

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:13): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Vince of Prestige Produce is a fourth-generation trader at the Melbourne Market. If the minister had visited Melbourne Market with me instead of mocking, she would have heard Vince say –

Members interjecting.

Emma KEALY: The respect for women appears to only be during ministers statements.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the House! Premier! Members, it is not okay to be disruptive in the house. I ask you to come to order. The member for Lowan without assistance.

Emma KEALY: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier just referred to me as ‘sweetie’, which I find very offensive. I find it very offensive and demeaning. I ask her to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The Premier will withdraw.

Jacinta Allan: I withdraw.

Emma KEALY: My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Vince of Prestige –
Members interjecting.

Emma KEALY: Speaker, please.

The SPEAKER: Member for Lowan, can you please state your question.

Emma KEALY: I will, without interruption. I would like to talk without interruption, like every other person gets to.

The SPEAKER: I am the Chair; you are not the Chair. I ask you to state your question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order.

Emma KEALY: My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Vince of Prestige Produce is a fourth-generation trader at the Melbourne Market. If the minister had visited Melbourne Market with me instead of mocking, she would have heard Vince say:

To continue to do business on this site will be very difficult. It would be a shame for the government if we all leave.

Why is the government driving traders out of the Melbourne Market by doubling their rent?

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:15): I thank the member for her question. I understand that she had a very good visit out at the market today, and that is great to hear. Thank you for passing back Vince’s concerns. I will refer the member to my answer to a very similar question yesterday, and that is that the market rents have been below market rate for 10 years. They will remain below market rate for another 10 years, and the MMA has taken the advice of the valuer-general.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:16): On Friday 11 October the Premier told the media that since relocating to Epping in 2015 rents for the market have not increased, but traders say their rents have soared by almost 50 per cent since 2015. Who is right, the traders or the Premier?

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:17): Again I thank the member for her question. I will refer her to my previous answers. The rents have been below market rate for 10 years, and they will remain below market rate for the next 10 years.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was specific to information the Premier has provided to the community, which the traders feel quite betrayed about because it is quite different to their experience. I ask the minister to clarify which is correct. It is a much different question than that put earlier today in the substantive and much different –

The SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Emma Kealy: On relevance – that she has not been relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. I ask you to state your point of order at the commencement of your point of order. It is not an opportunity to make a statement to the house. The minister was being relevant to the question. The minister has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: rental reform

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:18): The Allan Labor government has so far delivered more than 130 reforms to protect and enhance rights for Victorian renters, and excitingly there is still more to come. There is no other state in Australia with stronger rental protections than right here in Victoria. Our reforms mean that renters are able to keep pets, to have urgent repairs done and to make minor modifications, including being able to put up a picture hook – small, but important. We have introduced landmark minimal rental standards, and we have set up a renting taskforce to crack down on dodgy rental providers. We have provided \$8 million in support for renters through our rental stress support package, quadrupling our original commitment. Our landmark housing statement is continuing to improve rental standards, reducing energy bills and giving renters a safe and comfortable place to call home.

Those opposite could not care less about renters and strengthening their rights. They have consistently voted against fairness, and the last time those opposite were in government they cut hundreds of millions of dollars from housing and homelessness services. While they are focused on building up their personal portfolios and Airbnb portfolios –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, may I again refer you to page 160 of *Rulings from the Chair* and Speaker Brooks's ruling that ministers statements are not an opportunity to attack the opposition.

The SPEAKER: I am so grateful to former Speaker Brooks for his rulings from the Chair. Minister, it is not an opportunity to attack the opposition.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: While those opposite are very much focused on their personal property portfolios and their Airbnb portfolios, we will continue to focus on what matters to Victorians.

Members interjecting.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: There are plenty of property barons on that side of the chamber, let me tell you – looking at you, member for Croydon.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, I hope the Manager of Opposition Business has jumped up to defend the right of the minister to be heard in silence.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bulleen, remember what I said about respect.

James Newbury: On a different point of order, Speaker, the ruling from Speaker Brooks I am sure extended to protections of the Prime Minister from attacks from this Victorian minister.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: The only thing that Victorians can be sure of is that, when it comes to those opposite, they cannot be trusted. We are focused on Victorians, on giving them a great place to live, on breathing life into aspiration. Those opposite are only focused on themselves. They will never fight for Victorians; they will only ever fight each other.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bulleen, you can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Bulleen withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: I invite members not to be the timekeeper. I am the timekeeper.

Supermarket prices

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:21): My question is for the Premier. Foodbank has just released its latest report, which shows hunger and food insecurity in Australia have reached a critical point. It shows that half of all low-income households are now food-insecure. People are making critical choices like not eating for a day or skipping meals just so their kids can eat, all because of high food prices, and this is while Coles and Woolworths have just posted nearly \$3 billion in combined profits. The state government has the power to regulate and rein in supermarkets to stop price gouging and to stop high food prices. Why won't the Labor state government step in and control food and grocery prices?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:22): I thank the member for Melbourne for her question. I am a little discombobulated because I was expecting a question from the Liberal Party. Clearly there has been a switcheroo over there with the Greens and the Liberal Party in terms of the order of the questions for today, but that is okay. In answering the member for Melbourne's question, I will point out that I have already answered an almost identical question, notwithstanding that very important work that she referred to at the start of her question, the work that Foodbank has done in terms of the report, and I will come back to Foodbank in a moment. I have answered the back half of that question on previous occasions in the house, most specifically in response to questions from the member for Prahran.

But for the benefit of the member for Melbourne, in case the member for Prahran has not shared that information with the member for Melbourne, of course we know that it is the federal government and the ACCC who have the relevant powers in this space. Indeed we are seeing a lot of activity in the federal space on some of those challenges that everyone is experiencing when they go to the supermarket, but most particularly it is a real challenge for those vulnerable Victorians, many on low incomes. What we also know, and this goes back to the work of Foodbank, is that for a growing number of Victorians, because of those cost-of-living pressures and successive interest rate rises that are real for many Victorians, there is that increased demand for food relief, with more families experiencing the challenges of food poverty.

That is why in this year's budget we expanded the very important school breakfast program, a program that we deliver in partnership with Foodbank. Indeed 40 million meals have already been delivered through this program. This year's budget has expanded that program so more schools, indeed every government school, can have the opportunity to deliver the school breakfast program. I have seen this program work in school after school after school in addressing those two issues and in helping families who are experiencing food pressure, making sure that their children go to school, get a meal and then are ready to learn for the rest of the school day.

It has such an important impact on a young person's learning. That is why in this year's budget we have expanded that support, alongside bringing in the school saving bonus for the start of the school year. Families right now are receiving their information about how this \$400 support will make a meaningful difference for families struggling with these cost-of-living pressures.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:25): This Victorian Labor government has repeatedly said that this is an area for the federal government, but constitutionally, while competition policy sits with the federal government, price regulation sits with the state government. It is possible for state governments to do this if they want to. In fact the state government already steps in to provide some level of regulation over prices of other essential areas, such as energy and water, through the Essential Services Commission. This report shows things are now so bad. Given this, why won't the Labor government change their mind and finally step in to do something about high food prices?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:26): The supplementary question is in effect almost identical to the substantive question, and I have answered that question today and on previous occasions. We disagree with the member for Melbourne and her Greens political party colleagues on this question. This is a role for the federal government, this is a role for the ACCC and there is a

significant amount of work underway at the federal level to deal with this issue. We are making sure, though, that there are practical and real steps we can take right now, and that is why I mentioned earlier expanding the school breakfast program into every school, providing the school saving bonus, expanding the Glasses for Kids program, rolling out the Smile Squad dental vans to make sure that good dental health is supported. These are some of many initiatives that we are taking right now to support families in Victoria, who we recognise need this support now to deal with these cost-of-living challenges.

Ministers statements: Spring Racing Carnival

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:27): I am really pleased to rise and give people an update on the Spring Racing Carnival, in particular Caulfield on Saturday for the world’s richest 2400-metre handicap race, the time-honoured Caulfield Cup. Half a million dollars from the Major Racing Events Fund is being committed by our government for the Caulfield carnival. That is already reaping dividends. We have seen 20 per cent increases in crowds – 18,000 there at the Caulfield Guineas just last week.

When I am there this week, with my plus one the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, at the Caulfield Cup we will be down in the winners’ enclosure, and there may be a chance that we might miss a bit of the action. But I know that the local member the member for Caulfield will be present, and if we need any replays or we miss anything he will have it covered for us. I also want to touch on the fact that last year I missed the Caulfield Cup because I was with my good friend the member for Ripon at the Avoca Cup – great picnic races up in the bush. I want to also make that point more broadly about our country cups. Good luck to them all, particularly the Geelong Cup, which is next Wednesday with the members for Geelong, Lara and Bellarine.

Back to Caulfield and the Heath, though, I do know that the member for the Nepean has accepted. He might want to keep an eye on To Be Or Not To Be, which looks a good chance in race 6. My good friend the member for Sunbury will be there, and I know that he will be on Poifect in race 8. I am sorry the member for Brighton cannot come. There is always an opportunity to turn up, but in race 2 I do suggest Bodyguard. I know the member for Sandringham is going to be there. He is a big fan of supporting racing, and he will be on Midtown Boss in race 7 perhaps. The federal member for Wannan is going to be there. He is a great supporter, and I know that he has been talking to Mrs McArthur in the other place about the cup, particularly Warmonger and Revolutionary Miss in race 8. The father of the house – cannot leave him out of course – on Another Prophet in race 6. I am really disappointed that no-one’s picked up Too Darn Discreet in race 4 from those on the other side, but for the member for Hawthorn, Deny Knowledge and Inevitable Truth. Get on board. Whoever you are supporting, we will see you on Saturday.

Hospitality industry

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Employment. In the last 12 months Victoria’s share of Australia’s insolvencies in the accommodation and food services industry increased to 29 per cent. With almost 600 hospitality businesses in Victoria closing, how many jobs were lost?

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (14:30): I thank the member for the question. This is the first one I have had in 12 months, so that is pretty good. This is an economy in this state that is working hard, and that is also our businesses. We have got more business investment coming into this state, at 6 per cent, than any other state or territory in our nation. We have got employment levels at almost record highs for participation –

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker: relevance.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, I ask that you rule the point of order out of order. The minister was being directly relevant to the question. She was asked a question as Minister

for Employment, she is talking about the number of jobs that have been created in this state and she is less than 30 seconds into her question.

Bridget Vallence: Further to the point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was not about foreign investment; the question was about job losses. Could you ask the minister to be relevant.

The SPEAKER: The minister has had less than 30 seconds in her response. I ask the minister to come back to the question that was asked.

Vicki WARD: I do have to say I am surprised that those opposite are afraid of international investment coming into this state. I can tell you that on this side of the chamber we are not, so that point of order I find to be quite extraordinary.

We have got fantastic things happening in this state, and we have got businesses that are flourishing. We also have services that are here within our government to support those businesses who may be struggling, and I know the Minister for Small Business does an extraordinary job in supporting businesses in our state.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, again on relevance, the question was very direct about the 600 hospitality and accommodation services businesses that have closed. How many jobs were lost as a result of those closures?

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. I cannot direct the minister how to answer the question. She was being relevant to the question that was asked, but I do ask the minister to take heed of the question that was asked.

Vicki WARD: It is absolutely true that hospitality workers play a fundamental role in our community, and we do a lot on this side of the chamber to support that workforce and to support the work that they do. When we have major events happening in this state that generate over \$3.8 billion in our economy, we know that hundreds of thousands of hospitality jobs are created in our state, and the people work incredibly hard in that industry.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (14:34): I will take that one as not being answered. Simon Kouba started his first pizza business in Melbourne five years ago. His payroll tax bill has skyrocketed by 25 per cent. He has described it as:

... basically an anti-employment tax. The more people we hire, the more tax we pay ...

Has the minister advocated to the Treasurer to slash payroll tax in order to save hospitality jobs?

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (14:34): I thank the shadow minister for her question. Considering that we have increased the payroll tax threshold, that it is now up towards \$1 million from \$900,000 and that businesses generating I think it is around about \$3.5 million a year – she may wish to check that with the Treasurer – are paying payroll tax, I am really not quite sure what it is that the shadow minister is trying to get to when an extraordinary number of small businesses in our state are not paying payroll tax.

The SPEAKER: Before the minister commences, I acknowledge in the gallery former MP Barry Steggall.

Ministers statements: Respectful Relationships

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Employment) (14:36): Words matter and respect matters. We are updating our Respectful Relationships materials

and supporting the expansion of Respectful Relationships programs across our independent and Catholic schools. We need to support our kids to navigate a constantly changing world. Kids and parents need tools to help them be safe. We have heard the Premier and the Prime Minister call out damaging online behaviour, and I welcome the work to limit young teens' and kids' access to certain social media.

We can have an online world where respect can disappear, where kindness and empathy for difference can evaporate and where online influencers say women belong in the home, cannot drive and are a man's property. Our kids must be empowered to recognise and name harmful and hurtful behaviour. Kids know when people are being unkind, and Respectful Relationships helps our kids understand how to respond to disrespectful behaviour, keeping themselves and their friends safe. Just as it matters what is said in the classroom, it also matters in politics. Sexism and disrespect towards women create a permissive environment that can lead to violence. Disrespect towards people with disabilities, older people and people of different faiths and backgrounds can create spaces for aggression, repression and violence to fester. Respect is paramount for a society to flourish and for people to be their best, their strongest and their safest selves.

As leaders in communities, what we say matters too. It is harmful when a person of influence like Jeff Kennett uses derogatory and belittling language towards young women. It is harmful when gendered insults are used in this place, such as when the member for Brighton uses 'nasty' more than 12 times directed at the Premier. Let us be clear: on this side of the chamber we are committed to the safety of all Victorians and we are committed to Respectful Relationships.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! We have just talked about respectful behaviour.

Government performance

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier said that the community can trust Labor to deliver the projects that Victorians voted for. Well, Victorians voted for the Commonwealth Games – cancelled. Victorians voted for Geelong fast rail – cancelled. Victorians voted for the Arden hospital – abandoned. Victorians voted for the *Western Rail Plan* – abandoned. Victorians voted for 10 community hospitals – three abandoned. Victorians voted for the implementation of all recommendations from the mental health royal commission – abandoned. Why can't the Premier manage major projects or Victorians' money?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition not to incite his backbench.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:39): It is pretty clear that the plan for this week stopped at Tuesday lunchtime, isn't it, for the Leader of the Opposition? He had a plan up until midday Tuesday, and it has all been what it has been for the rest of the week from the Leader of the Opposition. But there is something that has been consistent, and this question exposes it once again.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker: relevance.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: On the point of order, Speaker, the anticipation from the Leader of the Opposition of what he thought may have been an attack on the opposition is deeply unfounded. I want to move a motion of thanks to the opposition for keeping him right where he is.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Nationals will come to order. I ask the Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was about to say, that question from the current Leader of the Opposition just demonstrates that you cannot trust those opposite to tell the truth in here, to the Victorian community, and you most certainly cannot trust –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Yan Yean, off you go. Make it an hour and a half.

Member for Yan Yean withdrew from chamber.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, again on relevance, Victorians are paying higher taxes and cuts to services. This is a serious question. Can the Premier please be brought back to the question.

The SPEAKER: There is no need to expand on the point of order. The Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: I am absolutely delighted, because it was only those of us on this side of the house who committed to all of the recommendations out of the mental health royal commission. Those opposite did not.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: I do not stand up as much as I should in this place, but I am really disappointed. This is the last question, and I ask you to show respect to the member on their feet. The Premier had a point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: Indeed, Speaker, the point of order was the one that you have just made from the chair. I was particularly waiting for a point of order from the member for Lowan to ask those opposite to not scream at the member on their feet.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, I have the ability to speak for myself. My point of order is that the Premier was not being factual, and I ask her to come back to the question and be factual in her response.

The SPEAKER: It is not for me to determine whether a minister or the Premier is being factual. The Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: We are proud of the work we are doing, particularly when it comes to supporting both our mental health sector and supporting and strengthening the mental health of all Victorians. I would have thought that was a matter that did not need to be interjected upon. We held a royal commission into mental health –

Richard Riordan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Polwarth! The Premier, without assistance.

Jacinta ALLAN: We had a royal commission into this, and it was this government, it was our government, it was a Labor government, who called this royal commission in recognition that it was a system that was broken, that needed reform. As part of those recommendations there was of course the mental health levy. That was one of those recommendations that those opposite did not support. They did not want to see that additional investment come into our mental health system. We know that this is an enormous task, but what I think Victorians also know is that they cannot trust those opposite to deal with this critical issue and so many others, because the Liberal Party do not trust each other, and neither should Victorians.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:45): How can Victorians ever trust the Premier when she has broken so many promises?

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Mordialloc withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:45): In terms of supporting the Victorian community and delivering what the Victorian community expects we should be focused on, let me remind the Leader of the Opposition what we have been busy doing over the past five weeks. While those opposite have been slugging it out in the courtroom, we have been out on the Victorian streets working with the Victorian community on, as we heard, record investment – significant investment – in repairing our roads, delivering the second tranche of women’s health clinics, delivering the first round of the Regional Worker Accommodation Fund, making every single campsite free in Victoria, also supporting our farmers in the south-west of the state through those drought conditions that they are experiencing and opening the largest wind farm in the Southern Hemisphere. This is what we are focused on, and look at that sad, sorry show opposite.

Ministers statements: housing

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:46): Every Victorian deserves a safe and comfortable place to call home, and that is why our government are using every lever we have to give them exactly that, and I can tell you that in coming days we will have a lot more to say about how we are going to focus on building more homes for more Victorians. We have made those big investments in social and affordable housing, building and unlocking homes and also providing more opportunities for more Victorians to get a home close to where they want to live.

But we also know that this is a big task. This is a big task because the demand for housing in this country has never been greater. We know that alongside investing in bricks and mortar, alongside building homes, we also have to look at the existing homes, the existing spaces that can be made available for more Victorians. Homes that sit vacant for months on end in the middle of a housing crisis are homes that are locked up. These homes could be in beautiful parts of our state, like Halls Gap – three-bedroom homes that are locked up in Halls Gap. They are homes that might be familiar to some in this place because they own them and run them as Airbnbs. But, again, further evidence of the complete lack of trust any Victorian can have in those opposite is that whilst he was advocating for Airbnb the Shadow Treasurer failed to disclose that he owned and operated an Airbnb.

This is a further example of just how deeply untrustworthy those opposite are. They do not trust each other, nor should Victorians trust them. We also know that when it comes to the question of building more homes for more Victorians we have the blockers opposite, who want to block every effort to build more homes to provide more opportunities for more Victorians to get a roof over their head.

Constituency questions

Polwarth electorate

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:50): (850) My question this afternoon is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, and my question to the minister is: Minister, could you please respond directly to Greg and Jodi Clarke from Great Ocean Ducks, who wrote to you on 23 September? The question they had for you is: can you support them with a short-term loan to assist with the effects of the avian flu that has devastated so many poultry businesses across the state? The Clarkes set up a business some five or six years ago, providing high-quality gourmet duck to some of the best restaurants across the state. It has been a great business. It has survived through COVID but is at great risk of really suffering because of avian influenza, because they are unable to get a duck supply in to continue to supply their customers. They need immediate assistance to help keep their staff and to upgrade some of the elements that biosecurity at Agriculture Victoria want them to do.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:51): (851) My constituency question is for the Minister for Water in the other place. What assistance is available from the Allan Labor government to support

the important work that is undertaken by the hardworking and dedicated volunteer environmental organisations to conserve the waterways in my electorate? Along the eastern border of the Glen Waverley electorate is Dandenong Creek, a stunning waterway for locals and wildlife in the east of Melbourne. From Jells Park in the south to Koomba Park in the north, this is where the Friends of Dandenong Valley Parklands do incredible work. That is why I am so proud of the volunteer efforts provided by this group, who have protected these parks with regular meet-ups since 1989. They carry decades of wisdom on conservation and community forums that this government wishes to recognise. I fully encourage people to attend a planting day with the Friends of Dandenong Valley Parklands. I cannot think of a more deserving and capable set of green thumbs to look after the waterways in my electorate. I look forward to the minister's response.

Mildura electorate

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:52): (852) My constituency question today is for the Minister for Agriculture and comes from food producers in my region, and it is about Queensland fruit fly. The question is: given the recent announcement that the government will be cutting funding for education about and management of Queensland fruit fly, which will absolutely decimate our multibillion-dollar agriculture industry, how does the minister plan to manage or eradicate the Queensland fruit fly in the state's north-west and right throughout Victoria? I am not sure if you know, but South Australia does not actually have a fruit fly population. In our part of the world, which abuts the South Australian and New South Wales borders, there are owners and food producers that produce on both sides of those borders, which makes logistics really, really tough. With the recent announcement of funding cuts to education – Sunraysia Pest Control have done an amazing job of management so far – there is big concern in the community.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:53): (853) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Earlier this week our government announced a \$964 million road maintenance blitz to rebuild, repair and resurface roads across the state, a yearly program that comes about each spring. Minister, how will this benefit my roads in Bass? My community rely on their highways, interconnecting township roads and of course local streets every day. We also have heightened traffic every year over the school holidays, long weekends, major events and the summer season, when visitors join us to delight in our many offerings, including incredible beaches, walking trails, wineries, cultural events and our exquisite natural environment. Residents are noticing and reporting to me sections of road that need attention, including the section on the South Gipps highway around Clyde-Five Ways Road, the strip between Koo Wee Rup, Caldermeade and Lang Lang, and parts of the Bass Highway too. I look forward to hearing how this announcement will benefit my community.

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:54): (854) My question is to the Premier, and I ask: when will the Premier address safety concerns of residents at 7 James Street, Brighton? The residents of James Street are living in fear. Many of the residents are elderly, and as one said to me, tenants are now talking about moving out in order to get some quality of life back and some peace. It is not fair. For background, 7 James Street is managed by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. A new tenant has moved into one of the units whose behaviour is alarming. As one tenant described it, that tenant is constantly screaming, day and night. A number of tenants are frightened and scared of what the tenant might be capable of doing. Incidents have been so serious that Victoria Police has been involved. Despite many attempts by the local community to seek government support, as one resident has said, the ongoing inaction from the department of housing is deeply concerning. Premier, the residents around James Street should not be in a position where they are forced to flee their homes because this government will not protect them.

Narre Warren South electorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:55): (855) My constituency question is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs and concerns financial counselling services. Minister, how will the announced extra funding for financial counselling services help those in my community of Narre Warren South who are experiencing rental and mortgage stress? I know that many households are struggling with cost-of-living pressures and mortgage or rent stress while trying to balance their household budgets. Thankfully, our government is delivering an extra \$15 million to support financial counselling services for people experiencing financial hardship. I am so grateful for our local community organisations as well and the work that they do to assist people experiencing hard times. I would also like to thank all of our frontline workers. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Prahran electorate

Sam HIBBINS (Prahran) (14:55): (856) My constituency question is to the Minister for Housing, and I ask it on behalf of the residents of the public housing tower at 259 Malvern Road: what evidence can the government provide to justify changing their decision of retaining the towers to demolishing them? In 2016 the state government released the *Prahran Housing Precinct Development Plan*. In the development plan, which had begun under the previous Liberal government, there were two options: one, to demolish the existing towers; another, to retain the towers. The Labor government originally decided to retain the towers whilst building new housing in the place of low-rise buildings. Yet, eight years later, the government has decided to demolish 259 Malvern Road. Many residents have lived there for decades. They rely on nearby services such as the Alfred hospital and local health services and are concerned about displacement. I ask the government to provide evidence on why they changed their decision from retaining the towers to now demolishing them.

Cranbourne electorate

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (14:56): (857) My constituency question is to the Minister for Environment, and the question I ask is: what has the Allan Labor government done to support wildlife conservation in Victoria? This week in Cranbourne we are all putting on our glasses and digging out our binoculars to support BirdLife Australia and the great Aussie Bird Count. Whether you are a window watcher, an urban observer, a backyard browser, a park peruser or some type of big-time birder – or even one of those slightly obsessive twitchers – I encourage you all to get counting. I look forward to the minister's response.

Warrandyte electorate

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (14:57): (858) My question is to the Minister for Police. Why did the minister bar local police from attending my community safety and crime prevention forum when police are attending similar forums hosted by neighbouring MPs? Bryan, a constituent of mine from Doncaster East, attended my community safety and crime prevention forum earlier this year, which I held due to rising community concern after a 48 per cent increase in burglaries across the electorate, including a 73 per cent increase in Doncaster East. After weeks of advertising that police would participate in the forum to answer residents' questions, local police were informed only 48 hours ahead of the event that they were not allowed to attend, leaving my constituents frustrated and disappointed. Yet there are similar forums running in neighbouring local electorates where police have attended. It would appear that the government has decided that some residents deserve to hear from police whilst others do not.

Box Hill electorate

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (14:58): (859) My question is to the Minister for Community Sport. What is the latest status of the Springfield Park upgrade in Box Hill North? As the minister knows, at the 2022 election Labor committed \$1.5 million to this very worthwhile investment to assist some great local netball and cricket clubs in the Box Hill electorate. There is immense excitement and anticipation from all members of the Whitehorse Colts Football and Netball Club, the Whitehorse

Pioneers Football and Netball Club and the Kerrimuir United Cricket Club to see this project completed, which will involve a multipurpose court and an extension to the cricket nets. A lot of fantastic people at those clubs have advocated tirelessly for these upgrades over a number of years. It has truly been a team effort. I want to again thank Melissa Collard from the netball club, Pat Marulli from the cricket club, Sam Benson from the Colts football and netball club and Alan Bertacco from the seniors club, as well as all the others who have helped along the way.

Rulings from the Chair

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER (14:59): I have reviewed the constituency questions from yesterday. The member for South Barwon asked a broad policy question that was not explicitly linked to his electorate or constituents. I therefore rule that question out of order. The member for Gippsland East also asked a broad policy question that was not sufficiently linked to his electorate or constituents. I also rule that question out of order. The member for Thomastown asked the minister to provide her with information, which is in effect requesting an action from the minister. I therefore rule the member's question out of order.

Bills

Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:00): I am pleased to continue speaking on this bill. At the break I was just getting on to the issue of the effective gas ban that is included in this bill, and I do raise my concerns on that from the perspective of the representative of the region that historically has produced virtually all of Victoria's gas and indeed all of the east coast gas originally. We have been doing so for 55 years in Bass Strait, coming into my electorate, to Longford, which has then provided, as I said, 90 per cent, up until recent years, of the gas.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: Where does it come from now? It is a fact that gas is running out. Esso expects that within the next 11 or so years the gas in Bass Strait will run out. I do hear a lot of debate in my local community in particular that there is heaps of gas out there, and I believe that is correct. There is heaps of gas out there in Bass Strait. Unfortunately, it is either very deep or very contaminated and therefore very expensive to produce and is not ever likely to be commercial, although at the rate that gas prices are increasing that might change, you never know. But that gas and oil over the decades has been fantastic for our region and has provided very good, very high paying jobs for those working either at the gas plant or offshore. Obviously the offshore component in particular is a very difficult job for people to do, to be away week on, week off – or two weeks on, two weeks off, as most are these days. But there have been fantastic benefits for our region, and I certainly continue to support that industry.

There may well be future opportunities. I know Lakes Blue Energy has reapplied for an exploration permit at its Wombat field onshore down near Sea Spray. As the member for Polwarth indicates, there seems to be a bit of onshore gas in his region. Indeed those opposite like to pretend that there is no onshore gas, but actually in the debate yesterday on the other bill, about gas storage, we pointed out that their own report indicates that there are significant prospective reserves onshore in Victoria.

What I am concerned about with the government's attempt to ban gas now is that it is premature in the context of the transition to renewables. There are opportunities. They still are a way away, but the notion that we will stop or remove residential and business gas I think is very premature because, firstly, we do not yet know whether those potential onshore and other offshore gas reserves may be

discovered and exploited and, secondly, there is the prospect in future of green hydrogen or indeed any hydrogen. I mentioned yesterday the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain project in the Latrobe Valley, which has gone through its pilot phase, has been proven to be technically possible and is now under consideration by the Japanese government as to whether it goes to commercial stage. The reason I raised that is that if the government, particularly the Minister for Energy and Resources, would get out of the way of this project and actually allow it to occur, it would give my region and those of the member for Morwell, the member for Gippsland East and even the member for Narracan the opportunity for the development of a hydrogen economy.

As I said yesterday, there is a prospect in the future – and it is only a hypothetical at this stage – that if we had a number of offshore wind farms operating in Bass Strait off Ninety Mile Beach and south of Wilsons Prom, as is currently proposed, particularly at times of low demand in the middle of the day, when the sun is shining and all the solar panels are doing their job, the electricity generated by that offshore wind could in fact be converted to green hydrogen.

The problem with that is it is some way off, and indeed the opportunity to replace some of our energy supplies through offshore wind is also some way off, apart from anything else because the government has messed up where the construction port is going to be for this project. We, under freedom of information, received a ministerial brief that was dated 7 October 2022 asking the then minister for ports to sign off on some funding for the Port of Hastings, and that brief said that it ‘must commence as soon as possible’ and that the development of the Port of Hastings required ‘urgent planning, technical and environmental work’.

Here we are literally two years later, with the federal government having knocked back the Port of Hastings, and the government has done nothing further. There is no clarity as to where the offshore wind sector will be produced. I have always argued that we should be doing more with Barry Beach. I would say again to the government: if you are going to understand that gas is going to be phased out and that we are going to lose jobs in the oil and gas sector in my electorate, then make sure there are some replacement jobs coming with the offshore wind industry and that the jobs that may well be created are not actually going to go to Geelong or to Hastings – or to Tasmania, perish the thought. The government does need to actually do that work and make sure that Gippsland does in fact benefit from this, because we have provided cheap, affordable and reliable power and cheap, affordable and reliable gas, for 50 years in the case of the gas and 100 years in the case of the electricity, and yet we are being left behind by this government because it is not focused on Gippsland and its needs in this area.

We do not oppose the other elements of the bill, but I support the member for Brighton’s reasoned amendment for all the reasons I have outlined. The government should not be seeking to stop people from connecting to gas. That is a premature decision, and that is why we will be opposing this bill.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (15:06): I am pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon after question time to contribute to the debate on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024 and to have the opportunity to build on a contribution from earlier this week where we discussed the important, significant and large-scale transition that is occurring within the energy market across our state. We know and understand the importance of the transition in a global context, in terms of reducing our greenhouse gases, and in the context of increasing supply and driving down the cost of energy generation. The bill before the house this afternoon, the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill, makes miscellaneous amendments to the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991 and the Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017, and if time permits I do want to touch on all three amendments relating to those various acts.

I do want to return to the changes around the measures that we are undertaking when it comes to gas and build on the discussion that was had earlier in the week and I think is happening broadly across the state. We know and understand that there has been such a significant transition, and not just in the past 12 months; it has really been one built by this government over a decade. Unfortunately, what we

saw was a policy vacuum from those in the federal coalition government for the best part of over nine years. Opportunities were lost I think in that space, not just for our state but for our country. This government has taken measures or steps in the transition to work with industry and to work with the thousands of workers that do incredible work within this space across local communities, many of them in regional Victoria. We are making sure that those steps are taken to provide certainty around solar and around wind, understanding that this is a government that deals in reality and not in myths or the circus that we see from those in the Greens political party. We know and understand that transition takes time and we are a growing population. This state is working very hard to ensure that transition is done in an effectual way, making sure that we are using all of the levers – the technology, the science, the advancement and everything in that space – to create a strong, reliable and secure source of energy. It is something we are very much determined to get on and deliver.

I will leave a lot of the comments from those opposite alone. I do just want to go back to some of the comments we know have been made both within this house and within the public space by the Greens political party. Knowing and understanding that these are real decisions that have implications for energy generation, costs and jobs is something that we remain focused on and having that opportunity to make these changes is something that we take very, very seriously. I want to commend the minister for the work that she has done – strong, sustainable work in this space. Knowing and understanding that these are important measures is something that we are very much focused on.

I will return to those changes that I referenced earlier, the amendments are supporting Victoria's *Gas Substitution Roadmap*, enhancing the building surveyor enforcement powers, protecting consumers from losing their right to bring building and plumbing legal actions, making administrative improvements to boost efficiency of building legislation and of course making sure that those steps and measures are done in the most effective way.

When it comes to the Building Act 1993, the amendments are supporting the implementation of the key components of the *Gas Substitution Roadmap*, ensuring that building surveyors have the necessary powers to issue building orders so that buildings are safe and the building work is compliant, protecting consumers from losing their building or plumbing legal actions in cases where the matter is transferred from VCAT to a court, introducing a new offence in relation to plumbing compliance certificates, clarifying offences relating to the performance of building surveyor functions and making various administrative improvements to boost the effectiveness of the Building Act.

When it comes to the Architects Act 1991, the amendments are requiring architects to renew their registration each year, including a fit and proper person declaration; requiring approved partnerships and companies to renew their approval each year; and improving clarity regarding powers to make regulations for charging fees. Finally, the bill implements the recommendations made by the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission to the Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017.

We are making sure that, as a local member that has seen and will continue to see significant growth within my community over many years, the planning provisions are as robust as we can make them and understanding, Acting Speaker, as I am sure you do and all members of the house do, the need to get the planning reforms right, making sure as we grow and thrive within local communities we are providing access to local services, health, education and transport within growing communities is something that is a deep passion of mine as a member of, as I mentioned before, a fast-growing community. But what is particularly important is that we equip our planning agencies with the powers and the regulations to ensure that all of these changes as we grow are able to be implemented in the most effective way and are protected from rarely but sometimes various threats that may present against them. Many of those are obviously contained within the numerous reports that have been canvassed both within the house and across communities.

What this comes down to is surety – making sure that the amendments contained across those three acts that I mentioned earlier go to the strong and sustained investment from this Allan Labor government ensuring that as we continue to grow communities have all of those provisions that we

mentioned before but also, when it comes to energy and the transition, making sure that we have the reserves, but we know what has changed from the past. The opportunity for cheap and plentiful reserves is no longer the case. Having now what is a finite resource, we have got those two levers of change – bringing on new transitional gas supply and storage and supporting Victorian families and businesses that need to get off gas – slashing the power costs and making sure that the opportunities for those provisions are in place.

It all comes down to making sure that we are providing for that certainty and that surety within local communities, because we know that by providing a range of options for our energy generation we are working towards turning that dial of bringing costs down but also having not just a responsibility to the Victorian community and every single person that lives in our country but of course a global responsibility, and that is very, very important.

I go back to what was I think very much a disappointing and lost decade, just about, of lack of federal leadership that we saw from Canberra. Thankfully, now that has changed. We have a strong partner that understands these are really important steps, important measures that need to take place, and I am very pleased to say that I think when you move around local communities and you speak to people about solar panels on roofs, for example, there is obviously a significant positive will within the community to do these things. But the legislation before the house continually needs to be upgraded, and that is why this bill, of course across those three acts, those three changes, is yet another incredibly important bill. We will continue to make sure we support local communities in each and every way, and on this Thursday afternoon I commend this bill to the house.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (15:16): At last we get to rise, with an hour and a half or so left of the Parliament sitting week, to discuss what is essentially one of the most important pieces of legislation that this government has tried to sneak through in its three terms of government, and when I say ‘sneak through’, I am not joking. Of course we had a debate earlier today when the opposition tried to bring this piece of legislation to the fore so that it could be debated properly. All members, particularly those in the opposition, who actually care about how energy and housing affordability affect Victorians wanted that opportunity to really prosecute some of the cases in this.

What I find most interesting about the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024 is that in the second-reading speech the minister made it clear that this is a set of reforms that the government wants to bring to make affordable, safe and comfortable homes. They talk about the affordability elements of this legislation. They also talk about how this is a piece of legislation that will assist in Victorians having more security and more certainty when they buy a home, renovate a home or build a home. This legislation does anything but for home owners, particularly those in Victoria at the moment suffering cost-of-living pressures and home affordability crisis issues. This bill does nothing of the sort.

What I am referring to specifically is the most egregious element of this bill, which is hidden in clauses 38 and 39 in a fairly wordy bill that has been brought before the Parliament. What it does is it inserts additional regulation-making powers, including powers for prohibiting a person from carrying out plumbing work in connection with certain connections to reticulated gas, extensions to the capacity of existing reticulated gas connections and the installation or replacement of certain reticulated gas appliances. It is unbelievable at a time when the energy transition is so far from complete in this state, at a time when cost of living is going through the roof, when this government has put cost after cost onto home owners and onto rental providers into the housing market. We heard yesterday this government is failing to keep its public housing stock up and it is going out to market. It is hoovering up homes at rates well above inflation and well above the going rate for rental homes in suburbs all over Melbourne. At a time when this government is putting so much pressure on, it is now that this government is going to criminalise the acts of plumbers. Can you believe it? We have got out-of-control crime and we have got youth crime at record highs, and we are now going to spend resources criminally tracking down plumbers who want to put gas appliances into people’s homes. This is

outrageous. Not only is it outrageous, but it just shows how disconnected this government is from the lives of average Victorians.

Just to give you one example of a gas appliance: a standard large, reticulated gas central heater, which are in their thousands across households all over Victoria and in regional Victoria as well, is a 130-megajoule appliance, and that is what you need for an average sort of four-bedroom, larger home. To convert that to an electric reverse cycle would require 36 kilowatts of electrical energy. Now, that is all very well and good if you say it quick enough, but the average reverse-cycle unit is somewhere between 6 and 8 kilowatts. Therefore to get the same amount of heat energy into your average Victorian home, you have to replace your one gas central heater with between four, five or six reverse-cycle air conditioner units. That is beyond the capacity of most people, particularly in the cost-of-living crisis at this time.

But, do you know what, that is further exacerbated in so many regional towns. I can quote my own home town of Colac at the moment, where people building new homes in new streets set up by this government, allowed for under the planning provision, guess what, only have 50 kilowatts available to each home installation, because there is not enough power going down the streets of many of our regional towns. That is in communities where they have got three-phase power, and there are plenty of regional communities that are still only on two-phase. This government is legislating disadvantage for people in homes right across Victoria – in regional Victoria and in our bigger cities – to an extent that is just not practical. We are the coldest mainland state. How is this government or any government going to sell to communities that they no longer can have access to technology and to a heating source that is used the world over for no other reason than their ideological push to rush through a transition that they have single-handedly failed to manage and implement in a way that is going to work and be effective and a clear replacement?

We know, for example, that there are so many elements that the renewable electrical transition does not have an equal replacement for, such as large kiln-dried timber plants, which I have in my electorate, which require a large-scale energy source. That is not yet available in electrical. People who live in regional communities do not have access to the amount of kilowatt power required down a powerline to fully allow them to have electric cooking, electric cooktops, electric hot water and electric heating. There is simply not the infrastructure in place. I do not see this bill and I do not see this government standing up and saying, 'Look, we haven't got this right yet. This is our ambition – to have a gas-free economy – but we aren't there yet.'

I also refer to the point that if we are going to allow new subdivisions and new developments to be built without the infrastructure in place, as the member for Gippsland South made really clear before, and the energy transition is far from complete and it is far from over, there is a lot of research the world over going into hydrogen and clean hydrogen, or green hydrogen, hydrogen as a shandy or a substitute for natural gas. This is about as emission free as you can get – if you can get a hydrogen world. What legacy is this government leaving to future developments in Victoria, where whole developments, buildings and whole communities could be left without that as an even more efficient, more clean-and-green option into the future? It does not make sense.

This government has brought this bill to this Parliament this week secretly with an hour and a half left to go, and they do not have a fully thought through energy plan that is going to see Victorians with the best, cheapest, most efficient options to keep their families warm, safe and heated, with hot water and proper cooking facilities. It does not make sense.

The other thing this bill fails to acknowledge is that of course there are many people that also rely on LPG, because LPG – liquid petroleum gas, which is sort of a substitute or an equal to natural gas – is an energy source of choice, particularly for those that do not even have electrical access.

The government has not ruled that out. But the natural consequence of putting this ban in and reducing the demand for natural gas is that those communities and those households and those businesses that

do not even have access to proper electrical supply will find that their choices and options on LPG products will naturally decline, because it is natural gas products that create the volumes in manufacturing and demand and most gas appliances, or a significant percentage of gas appliances, here in Victoria are in fact manufactured in Australia. Actually, putting a gas appliance in is more likely to benefit Victorian manufacturing and Australian manufacturing and Australian jobs, whereas the bulk of electrical products are in fact imported from all sorts of other locations.

What is going to happen is those people who are forced to have LPG for their hot water, for their cooking, even for their refrigeration – and I am sure no-one on the government side even realises that there are plenty of people in regional Victoria that rely on gas to provide their refrigeration needs in their homes – will all be in jeopardy when gas manufacturing is clobbered to death by this government in a piece of legislation such as this that is so ill thought out. It is a rush to a government's ideological point of view to keep their inner-city friends the Greens happy. This is what this bill is about. It is not about what is best for all Victorians, for all households, and it is certainly the last thing this state needs in a cost-of-living crisis, in a housing affordability crisis, to deliver such uncertainty. People have a right to know that they can continue on with their own choices – not forced choices by this government, but their own choices – for what is best for their home, their household and their hip pocket.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:26): I am sorry this bill is so secretive – I mean, it is actually being debated on the floor of Parliament, and as far as I know it is live streamed. This is not in camera, is it? I think this is actually live streamed. But apparently they are claiming it is secret. Let me say it out loud: Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. Has everyone heard it, loud and clear? Yes – nothing secret about this. We are actually proud to be debating this bill in Parliament. It is live streamed. Enough of that crap. That is absolute crap, and it is a diversion from the central tenets of this bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (John Mullahy): Language.

Nina TAYLOR: Sorry, I withdraw that particular word. It was perhaps a little bit unparliamentary, so I will take the lead on that.

Going to the issue of not wanting to lock Victorians in to decades of higher bills – shame on us for not wanting to do that. But – oh, yes – we are leading on this legislation and this reform because we know that gas is getting more and more expensive. Fossil gas has played an important role in powering Victoria's energy system and economy for many years – this is true. Transition is not an easy thing to do. But rest assured that those opposite are doing everything they can to block the transition, because they do not like clean energy and they are renewable energy phobic. We knew that already. However, recent price increases and declining supply mean it is no longer the cheap and abundant source it once was. We could sit on our hands, do nothing and hope, but that is not what our government is about, because we want to look out for Victorian households and make sure that they are supported into the future in a very logical way, because there are good logical reasons to make an energy transition and to go electric.

I know there are many businesses who are themselves actually taking on the impetus; they are actually taking the initiative. I know that even in my own electric – in my own electorate; I am getting a little bit excited about that word, but for good reason, I will tell you – I visited Equinix with the Minister for Energy and Resources some time back, and I tell you, it is just a sea of solar panels, and they gained the funds to help substantiate those particular solar panels through our Victorian energy upgrades program. This is a private business. And why? Because they knew that if they did not take this initiative, in the future their energy bills were going to get more and more expensive. So they are taking advantage of the Victorian energy upgrades program in order to safeguard their business and their profits into the future – fancy that. But if you listened only to those opposite, you would think that we were the grim reaper coming in, draconian, to harm Victorians and punish them with their energy supply, when it is exactly the opposite. We are supporting our Victorian constituents to transition.

But there is another point I wanted to make, coming back to that issue of being secretive on this matter. Let us just think about what this legislation is actually enabling. The government is doing this through a regulatory impact statement, get this, for public consultation. I am going to repeat that: for public consultation. There is nothing secretive about that. We are speaking to that in this chamber, and it is being live streamed. The regulatory impact statement and exposure draft regulations cannot be published for public consultation without the regulation-making powers in this bill. In fact it is the opposition that is trying to quash the public consultation. How ironic is that? Hence we need this legislation to facilitate the public consultation. Let us do that. That seems a really fair and logical thing to do, and I believe that Victorian constituents deserve that. Don't they deserve public consultation on this issue so we can be really up-front about it and take them on the journey? No-one is hiding anything here. Otherwise why would we be trying to get the regulations in place to facilitate public consultation? Enough of this nonsense about being secretive and hiding the bill under a table or wherever, as we have apparently done, and let us be real and proper about this and also acknowledge the benefits for the Victorian community.

I should say, just coming back to those Victorians who have already taken the initiative here on the back of the Victorian energy upgrades program, in 2023 more than 506,000 homes and 24,000 businesses received upgrades through the program. More than 2.4 million households and businesses have taken advantage of the program since 2009. I just wonder whether the opposition are sort of flying in the face of all these Victorians. What are they saying about them? Do they not think that they have made a wise decision to become more energy efficient? What really is the signal that they are sending to the Victorian community? I should say when we are looking at investing in cleaner and renewable energy, because we really want Victorians to be able to save on their energy bills, this is not just something that happens in Victoria. I have to commend the Minister for Energy and Resources because she has worked darned hard to advance the legislative framework to facilitate the transition that we are driving hard for in this state, to the extent that we now have the SEC enshrined in the constitution – that says just how serious we are not only about bringing power back to the people but also about facilitating a cheaper, cleaner energy future.

But I should say, yes, it happens not only in Victoria and not only in Australia – although there was a very good point made by my colleague the member for Sunbury, who was saying that we did have a recalcitrant federal government that for nine years sat on its hands and did nothing and this is why Victoria has had to carry a fair whack of the load, but we have been happy to do it because it is the right thing to do. But internationally, when you go overseas, you see wind farms and other things. I should say we are very lucky that we do have freely available sunshine and wind here. We do have a lot of weather conditions that enable a transition to a renewable energy future, and in some other parts of the world which are a lot colder and do not see the same amount of sunshine et cetera, it is certainly a more difficult transition. Nonetheless I do remember seeing wind farms in Copenhagen, and it is pretty cold there, so it is not isolated to our sunny Australia.

Anyway, on average households and businesses that undertake energy efficiency upgrades under the program save \$110 and \$3700 respectively on their annual energy bills. For us to be condemned for trying to support our Victorian households to save money on their energy bills I find, frankly, galling and also confusing. But anyway, if they want to continue down that rather retrospective track, I guess that is who they are. Get this: even those who do not participate will save on their bills, with households saving \$150 and businesses saving \$870 due to lower network costs. I do not know why they are not reading the room, because I have to say, frankly, that when I talk to constituents about cleaner energy, using wind and sun et cetera, there is a lot of excitement about that and they are on board with it.

Solar Victoria has supported over 360,000 installations in Victoria. Solar Victoria has supported over 280,000 installations of solar PV in Victoria, 7500 solar PV systems have been installed at rental properties and the program has surpassed an energy-generating capacity of 2 gigawatts – bigger than the Yallourn power station. That is real action, and you can see that there is actually a really sound purpose to electrifying and to transitioning to cleaner energy. But we can see, obviously, there are

thousands of Victorians on board with this, for good reason. I would like to show some faith in fellow Victorians who have made the decision themselves – no-one has forced them. They have made the decision for good, logical reasons. I like to think our Victorian community are pretty sharp. They know what is going on.

Solar Victoria has supported the installation of over 16,200 batteries through rebates and loans. Is that not fantastic? Why are they not excited? I am excited. This is fantastic. This is so great. We have supported the installation –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Oh, I can do better? Yes, I have actually been to social housing in my electorate, where we have helped them upgrade to two-way aircon. I have seen it myself, because when I have doorknocked and actually talked to people, I have seen where we have helped them to upgrade, just so you know.

Anyway, we have supported the installation of over 30,000 hot-water systems. I am sorry those opposite are not happy about that and the savings that it will bring for 30,000 Victorian households, but I think that is pretty fantastic and I am pretty proud that we are part of supporting them on this magnificent transition.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (15:36): I rise to make some comments on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. While I note the focus of most people's contributions on this bill have been around what is obvious – and to me that is gas and the government's desire to criminalise the installation of gas into homes in Victoria – I note there are a number of other aspects to this bill, which I want to make some comment on. The bill refers to the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991 and the Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017. In referencing those acts it is also referencing the authorities. Some of those authorities have got pretty clear roles and pretty clear objectives, particularly at this time when we are going through a housing affordability crisis. It is important, as we are talking about a potential decrease in housing affordability, or making houses even more unaffordable, by forcing people off gas and onto electricity, that we look at what those authorities have been doing to play their part in bringing homes to market and what the government has been doing with those authorities to bring homes to market, as this bill has outlined, through particularly the Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017. The VPA is an iteration of the Metropolitan Planning Authority, which was an iteration of the Growth Areas Authority, which has had its remit expanded over a period of time and now features in this legislation. It has a very clear objective under part 2 of its establishment legislation, under section 7, 'Objects', and subsection (2)(e) 'to promote the supply of housing' and (f) 'to encourage land development'. It is very clear as to what its objectives are.

Let us have a look at what the record of the VPA, and the government through the VPA, has been in terms of doing just that. Sometimes in life you get to utter these four words: 'I told you so'. When you tax the development industry to death, you do kill it, and when you do kill it, that means there are fewer homes for Victorians to get into – fewer apartments, fewer places in established suburbs and towns and fewer homes in growth areas. That is where we are now. A decade of government that has taxed our development industry to death now cries, 'We've got a housing crisis.' Well, I am not surprised. Victorians who cannot get into a home and who look back 10 years ago to me as planning minister, who approved more homes than any other minister in Victoria's history, must wonder, 'How did we get here?' We got here through bad government and bad decisions. I will say that again: as minister I approved more homes – high-rise, in density, in urban renewal and on our cities' and provincial towns' fringes – than anyone else in the state's history, in four years. And do not take my word for it – I am sure most would not.

Let us have a look at some of the Charter Keck Cramer report figures. In the financial years ending after the reign of the Liberals – this is apartment launches, not press release launches; this is the actual launch of the towers – and after the effect of the Liberals' policies of getting people into houses we

totalled 69,500 apartments. In the last financial year for the current Labor government it was 2000 across the metropolitan area – 2000! So when you tax an industry to death you do kill it.

Katie Hall interjected.

Matthew GUY: I say to the member for Footscray that it is funny you are now crying out about how bad new houses are in your electorate. Your Premier got up in question time and rightly said that Victoria does have a housing affordability crisis, so do you want to bag housing or are you in favour of housing? You are the ones who are saying you want to solve housing affordability.

Members interjecting.

Matthew GUY: I did not interject on any of yours, so you come off mine. You want to solve a housing affordability crisis, yet what you are saying is, 'Not in my backyard.' You are saying to people over here, 'You're the NIMBY, you're the NIMBY,' but not in your backyard, hey?

Let us have a look at commencements, shall we? In four years there were 25,000, 16,000, 18,000 and 20,000. What did we get last year? Not even 3000 new apartment commencements. There has been an impact from all of this, and particularly in growth areas, where we have got 119 precinct structure plans. If the minister wanted to, she could bring those structure plans to market at any stage. The minister has the ability to do this. To his great credit, the former member for Essendon Justin Madden realised this, and he started to move fairly quickly to solve this problem. I recognised exactly what he was doing. It was the right policy and turbocharged what he had in fact started, because he recognised that bringing homes to market in those growth areas was the right thing to do – credit to him, a Labor planning minister. But we then had the reign of the former minister Dick Wynne, who said famously to the planning and development industry, 'I won't approve anything that I wouldn't live in.' It is like saying, 'I'm banning everyone from holidays. I'm not going to go to Uruguay because I wouldn't go there, and you can't either.' It is ridiculous.

There are 119 precinct structure plans in the Melbourne growth boundary; 75 of those have been completed, and I might add about 40 per cent in the four years that I was the minister. They are homes. They are giving Victorians the chance to rent, to buy and to be in a respectable dwelling of their own. It is the right thing to do to give them a home. We have got record population growth. The state government does not control that, neither Liberal nor Labor. But we have to respond to it, and we have to respond to it fairly and reasonably, and that means getting people into a home. No, it is not always right, but you have got to get people into it. What does the Labor government do apart from putting out a press release? They have under preparation 10 precinct structure plans and the precommitment number is eight, which means there are 18 in the system the minister could approve very, very quickly. She has approved none.

This is a minister who gets up in this chamber and says, 'We're all for housing,' but puts height limits in the Preston market. I lived in Preston for 12 years. She puts height limits across the Preston market site. It is flat. There are no topographical issues and there are no shading issues, but she puts a mandatory height limit there when she could be actually achieving more dwelling numbers in a centre that is changing its density requirements, that has a new railway station, that has the Plenty Road tram, that has the cross-city bus connections as well as connections to the airport and Essendon. The minister puts on for political reasons height limits at that location but then does not at other locations. This is the minister that says, 'We're doing all we can to get people into homes.' No, they are not. This is the responsibility in this legislation of the Victorian Planning Authority. You only actually have to look at things like the number of cranes in the sky of Melbourne to see the level of private activity in this city. Politicians from either side can come in here and boast all they like about what they are doing and gloat about their achievements, but reality is a different story. Melbourne has fewer private cranes in the sky in its CBD than the Gold Coast.

When we were in government Melbourne had nearly 70 per cent of private cranes in the sky in our CBD, Docklands, Southbank area – 70 per cent. Fact. Under Labor there are more in the Gold Coast.

This is the government that says that through the VPA in this legislation they are going to have a remit to fix housing affordability. The more homes you put into the market, the more you encourage price stabilisation. It does not help the developer. Go and tell this to the communists down at the *Age*. It does not help the developer to approve more and more and more developments. What it does is it floods the market and developers have to compete.

When we came to government in 2010 there were only two major developers active in the northern suburban market. By the time we left government there were more than a dozen. Prices stabilise. Who does that help? That helps the consumer. That helps someone who wants to get into a home. That is how the Liberal Party views planning. Not that it is a government problem to make a wild announcement that they are going to build 80,000 government dwellings to 80,000 total dwellings to an indeterminate number that no-one knows because they cannot meet anything. Our view is you encourage the private sector, you give a tax incentive and the beneficiary is going to be the mum, the dad, the kid, the single or the whatever who just wants to get into a home. That is the housing affordability crisis we need to fix that is contained in this bill in relation to the VPA's responsibility.

It is very simple: Victoria needs to be more proactive in solving this crisis, and the people who can do that are the Premier and the minister. They could act tomorrow. It does not involve a press release. It involves real action, but you cannot doublespeak – you have got to mean it.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (15:46): I rise to contribute to the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. I want to commend the Minister for Planning for bringing this bill forward, and there is a lot more to come. As the Premier said in question time, there are many, many announcements to happen very shortly. This government will be delivering on our building plans. These significant reforms to Victoria's building system will help shape a much more sustainable, affordable and consumer-friendly future for everyone in our state.

The ability to build, to buy or to renovate a home is central to achieving security and comfort. The Victorian government is committed to ensuring that these experiences meet the highest standards. The government is in the process of introducing a series of reforms to ensure that whether you are building your dream home, making renovations or buying property you can do so with the confidence that your investment is safe – that is really important to all of our constituents – that it is affordable and that it will be built to last. These changes will progressively reshape how Victoria's building system works. We have seen that we need those changes to deliver on our big agenda of building 80,000 houses per year.

The amendments make key changes to existing legislation, specifically the Architects Act 1991 – it was a fantastic year; the mighty Hawks won the premiership – the Building Act 1993 and the Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017, and it creates the capacity to futureproof for further changes as required.

Martin Cameron interjected.

Steve McGHIE: Go Hawks, yes. Member for Morwell, thank you. These amendments will ensure practitioners meet their obligations by modernising gas and energy systems and they support the *Gas Substitution Roadmap* in transitioning Victoria towards cleaner, more affordable energy sources. I think we all want to make things more affordable for our families, in particular right now when the cost of living is probably the key issue that is affecting all Victorian families. As we say, moving towards cleaner and more affordable energy sources is a key issue in assisting all those families. Certainly streamlining the operations and governance and making legislative processes more efficient supports practitioners and regulators alike. These reforms will support the transition away from gas, as we have heard through many contributions, to more sustainable electric-powered systems in homes and commercial properties. Of course it helps reduce the cost of living, as I have referred to, and it promotes renewable energy.

It also contains a requirement that gas space heating systems at the end of their lives are replaced with efficient, cheaper-to-run electric alternatives. That is hot-water systems, and let us re-emphasise that

it is at the end of their lives and they are to be replaced by more efficient and cheaper-to-run electric alternatives. Again, this is at the end of their lives. We are not forcing anyone to replace those systems before the end of their lives. When you get a system that becomes faulty or a hot-water system that starts to leak, you have had it for a number of years and you know that it will probably be more expensive to be repaired, then what is being proposed here is that you replace it with a more efficient, cheaper-to-run electric alternative.

The member for Brighton might choose to ignore important parts of the legislation and generate some sort of disingenuous scare campaign with falsehoods such as banning gas entirely, which of course is a nonsense. We are not doing that. There is no requirement to replace, as I said earlier, gas cooktops with electric ones. There is no requirement for existing commercial buildings to replace gas appliances with electric ones. As I referred to just a moment ago, even for households replacing their systems, it is at the end of their lives. They are not being forced to do so prior to that.

The majority of Victoria's fossil gas is used for space heating and hot water in residential and commercial buildings. Electrification and energy efficiency offer the most immediate and cheapest opportunities for reducing gas consumption for these users while helping to ease the cost-of-living pressures and reliability risks and making sure that the gas we have goes towards industry – and it is imperative that industry is maintained by having access to gas – and that there is enough for our industries, rather than exhausting it on household consumption, where we know that if gas is replaced by electrification, it is cleaner, it is cheaper and it is utilising renewables. They are the transitional arrangements – again, at the end of life of their particular systems.

It is worth also pointing out that the level of nimbyism coming across the chamber is pretty astounding. The abject denial of climate science and the whole rejection of even the idea of losing your gas stove hob is embarrassing, but we have constantly heard it through a number of contributions from across the aisle. Next year, personally, both my wife and I are going to be starting to build a new home, which I am pleased to say will be all electric, just like the new Melton hospital. We will be starting to build the new Melton hospital before the end of this year, and that will be all electric. We will have solar, and we will have battery storage. I am really proud that I will be building an all-electric home, and I look forward to the commencement of building that home and completing that home next year. I look forward to having all-electric appliances, and I must say that the only gas cooking that I will be doing will be on the barbecue. I quite like cooking on the barbecue, let me tell you, because it gives me an opportunity – and some people in this chamber would know I do not mind a bit of a tipple at times – to stand there at the barbecue and have a couple of glasses of wine.

Richard Riordan: It should be an electric barbecue.

Steve McGHIE: No, I love using the gas barbecue, and I love drinking my red wine. The only other place that I will be using gas will be when I am travelling in the motorhome. It has got gas, so I will be using that when I am camping. But also the motorhome is connected to power. We have got not only gas jets but also electric jets on the stove in the motorhome, so that is great. I know my friend the member for Laverton mentioned her Thermomix, which is interesting, but I can get the same joy out of my barbecue and out of my gas stove in the motorhome. I have no idea what a Thermomix is, but I will look it up and we will see how we go. Can you drink a couple of glasses of wine with a Thermomix? I do not know, but I might try it.

Members interjecting.

Steve McGHIE: I might check with Hastings; it will be in the recipe book. We are supporting Victorian families to get off gas, but that is not just what this bill is about. Clearly, as you know, renewable energies – solar, wind – are really important. We know in the western part of the state we have just opened up the biggest wind farm in the Southern Hemisphere, out near Rokewood, and also there will be a big battery. My understanding is that that wind farm will be able to power up all of the regional households across the state, which is amazing, and we will continue to do that.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Steve McGhie: Oh, no, we will be right. We have got clear vision here: a building system that is going to be efficient, safe and fit for a sustainable future. These reforms reflect not just a response to current challenges but a proactive effort to build a system that serves future generations, and that is what we have got to think of. Obviously, with the growth – the number of households that need to be built and powering those places – transitioning away from gas and using and growing our renewable energy industry and the jobs that that creates is great for this state. This is a terrific bill. I thank the minister again, and I commend this bill to the house.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (15:56): I rise to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. Strap yourself in for the tradie hour, because I am a former plumber, and the member for Narracan who is to follow me is a builder, and we physically and mentally had to work through this legislation in our jobs. I think in the next little bit we might get a few fun facts that may come out about the building legislation and the other matters.

I would like to jump straight to clause 38. We have had people that have gone to this clause straight away and spoken about it. They were saying that the government is trying to shut down the gas industry, but I take this clause as worse. What they are doing is waging a war against plumbers and gasfitters, because written here in black and white in clause 38, which I will read out shortly, is the end of plumbers and gasfitters being able to do their jobs. I am not sure if the people who came up with this clause have realised that. We talk about unintended consequences that happen inside legislation. Well, one of these two clauses here will stop plumbers from being able to go out and repair or replace gas appliances or extend gas lines in people's houses, and that is a travesty of justice. It does not matter the colour of your skin, your sexual preference or what religion you follow, if you are a plumber and gasfitter, the government has your days numbered. It is in black and white here, and I will read it out:

Clause 38 inserts new paragraphs (fa) and (fb) into section 221ZZZV(1) of the **Building Act 1993**, which provides that the Governor in Council may make regulations for or with respect to ...

So a Governor will be able to change at any time some of these laws moving forward. The bill states:

(fa) prohibiting a person from connecting reticulated gas, or extending the capacity of an existing reticulated gas connection, to an existing building –

that is, your home, or it might be a shop down the street or a building under construction, or it might be a new house that is being built, a new dwelling for people to move into –

... or to a building in a class of existing building or a class of building under construction ...

That is the first one. So you are thinking to yourself, 'Well, I'm going to be forced, if this comes along, not to have gas at my house, because I'm not going to be able to extend the gas lines, to put new appliances in or to replace appliances if it comes through.'

The member for Melton said before that at the end of life of an appliance you can actually make a choice and get an electric hot-water service. Well, that is fine, but today there would be a couple of hundred hot-water services, gas hot-water services, that would have blown up around the state. If we have these couple of hundred hot-water services blowing up around the state and we are relying on our electricians to come to our house to install the new power supply and put the new hot-water service in, there is going to be a backlog in doing it. So we do need the capacity to be able to replace a gas hot-water service as such if it explodes, because it does make it very hard if people have to wait for the time frame to get an electrician out. As I said, as I read that out, the plumbing and gasfitting industry is going to be under siege because of these amendments from this government.

Paragraph (fb), the second one:

prohibiting a person from carrying out plumbing work ...

That would be people like me in connection with installing or replacing reticulated gas appliances. That is that hot-water service that I just spoke about, or your central heater. In the next while, when this comes in after the government has the opportunity to bring in these amendments when we vote on it later on today, it means we will not be able to go and replace your gas central heating unit or your gas oven or your gas hotplates, because it says here:

prohibiting a person from carrying out plumbing work in connection with installing or replacing a reticulated gas appliance or a reticulated gas appliance in a class of ... a building under construction or in a building in a class of existing building or a class of building under construction ...

It is saying it there in black and white. Why is the government hell-bent on stitching up the poor old plumber and gasfitter? If something goes wrong and your toilet blocks or you have got a blockage, who are you going to ring? You call the plumber, he comes out and you get him to clear that blockage, but when it comes to someone that has spent years learning the gas trade and is specialised in this area, they are fixing them up, and it is just not fair. I am not sure if it is an unintended consequence from the people that come up with the legislation, but that is how it reads, that is really how it reads.

Plumbers and gasfitters jobs are going to be maybe a thing of the past in the gas industry. You have only got to look around. We heard before about businesses in manufacturing that need gas to burn at a high temperature to produce everything that they are producing and is probably going into the Big Build of Melbourne at the moment – to make all the steel cages to go into the foundations. They are relying on the gas-fired burners to actually provide that energy source so they can do it. We need to take a step back and reassess what the government is trying to achieve here.

Who is going to be next? Is it going to be the builders that are going to be picked on next? Because they have started on the poor old plumber, a tradie who is out there trying to do an honest day's work and do the right thing by his community right around regional Victoria. At the moment most homes rely on gas. I think everybody in the chamber here, if they talk to their constituents around their areas, would know they are relying on gas as an affordable alternative at the moment to keep themselves warm, to be able to have hot water come out of the taps so they can have a shower and also as a cooking source.

As soon as this jumps on and we cannot actually renew some of these gas appliances when they break down or when we cannot extend gas lines to the current appliances, I wonder what happens – and it does happen a lot – when the actual pipes break down and you have a gas leak at your house. You ring up APA and they say, 'Get yourself a plumber. We've come out and it's the plumber's role' and the plumber ascertains, 'You've got a gas leak here, but I need to re-purpose and refit the gas line from the front of the house down to the back of the house. No, no, no – I can't do that because it says here that you cannot actually extend gas services down to run these gas appliances.' Where does it lie? It is going to be the plumber whose licence is going to be on the line, who has to sign off with a certificate of compliance. Are we going to be held accountable for saying to the poor old person that needs to have that gas line fixed, 'Oh, sorry, you're going to have to ring the electrician and get them to come in and actually redo your whole house,' because under here, in these amendments, we are not going to be allowed to do that.

It really worries me where it is all going. What about the kids? We talked about barbecues before. What about the poor old kids that want to go to Bunnings or Barbecues Galore to buy their dear old dad the gas barbecue for Father's Day? Well, I am sorry, kids, the government has got you in the scope too, to not let you go and do that: 'No, Dad, sorry, you can't cook your barbecue. We can't have the sausages out there on a great night.' The member for Melton and I, sitting back watching the Hawks have another win next year, will not be able to do that with our gas-fired barbecue because it says here in the legislation that we are not going to be able to do that. Here we go – poor old kids, you are under the gun too.

We have got plumbers and gas fitters of all persuasions, people who have worked their backsides off for years to become licensed to do that, in the gun. As a former plumber I am shocked that the

government could actually come up with amendments that are going to make their lives harder and harder. I am sure, moving forward, there are going to be other people who are going to come into the gun of the government over this.

It is building legislation. We want to take the gas part out. That is what the member for Brighton has suggested that we do, and I stand with him and say: let us get that gas bit out.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (16:07): I move:

That debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024

Council's amendments

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert) (16:07): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2024 with an amendment.

Ordered that amendment be taken into consideration immediately.

Message from Council relating to following amendment considered:

1. Insert the following New Clause to follow clause 78 –

78A New section 123A inserted

After section 123 of the **Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008** insert –

123A Review of operation of this Act as amended by the Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Act 2024

- (1) The Minister must cause a review of the operation of this Act, as amended by Part 2 of the **Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Act 2024**, to be commenced after the third anniversary of the day on which Part 2 of the **Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Act 2024** comes into operation.
- (2) The Minister must cause a copy of a report of the review to be laid before each House of the Parliament no later than the fourth anniversary of the day on which Part 2 of the **Health Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Act 2024** comes into operation.”.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (16:08): I move:

That the amendment be agreed to.

This bill gives effect to reforms that were announced last December to strengthen and reform health regulation in Victoria, providing greater consistency to regulation across the health system through the newly established health regulator. I want to acknowledge the review amendment, which was discussed by and agreed with the opposition. The amendment to include a three-year legislative review is supported by our government as it aligns with the purposes and aims of our reform work.

We know that the health and assisted reproductive treatment sector is complex and continues to rapidly evolve with developments in science and technology, as well as social attitudes and community expectations. Review of the implementation and operation of these legislative reforms will be ongoing and iterative to ensure the best outcomes for Victorians, and this will be supported by a formal legislative review.

In sum, the reforms in the bill are necessary to ensure that health regulation in Victoria is modern and evolves in line with contemporary best practice regulation and with changes in risks, technology, knowledge and practice, and community expectations. This means a safer, stronger health system for all Victorians.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (16:09): I acknowledge the government in accepting the opposition's amendment, but I also acknowledge the work of the Shadow Minister for Health in the other place. This amendment will ensure that there is a three-year review into the operation of the legislation. I know the shadow minister Ms Crozier has worked very hard on this bill, and I acknowledge her good work.

Motion agreed to.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): A message will now be sent to the Legislative Council informing them of the house's decision.

Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (16:10): I am pleased to rise today on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. I will probably keep my comments to clause 38, as have most people today. I was at the bill briefing on this, and I actually said at the bill briefing that it was not a bad bill but for clause 38. Why can't we take clause 38 out and debate that separately so this can go through today? I believe that. I actually think most of the bill is pretty good. I had a few questions; they got answered. I was very happy with the process. But clause 38 is of great concern, and it is a concern to me.

What I would like to do – and I am not going to rant and rave and carry on too much – is use this time for education on the complications and possibly the unintended consequences of this bill. I will just go through what is stated at the moment. The first part of it is:

prohibiting a person from connecting reticulated gas, or extending the capacity of an existing reticulated gas connection, to an existing building or a building under construction or to a building in a class of existing building or a class of building under construction ...

The second part to this is:

prohibiting a person from carrying out plumbing work in connection with installing or replacing a reticulated gas appliance or a reticulated gas appliance in a class of reticulated gas appliance in an existing building or a building under construction or in a building in a class of existing building or a class of building under construction ...

For all those 'classes' and 'buildings under construction' and 'yap, yap, yap' in that, let us break it down to what it actually is. I am going to put this in really, really practical terms. If you are renovating a house, within that house you will have gas central heating; you will probably have one or two Rinnai Infinity systems, depending on the size of the house – they are a gas instantaneous hot-water system; and you will probably also have a gas hotplate. Your average punter might go, 'We don't have a lot of land now' and might want to do a second-storey extension on that house. Most gas lines that are run into nearly, I would say, 90 per cent of the homes in Victoria are 25 mil gas lines. This is important to note, because if I want to do that extension on that second storey and I need another hot-water service on that second storey – or I might need another central heating unit because of the design of the house – I would have to upgrade that gas line from 25 mil to 32 mil. Under this legislation you would not be able to do that. You cannot do that.

What also concerns me is this. I do not necessarily have a problem with homes being all electric – and congratulations to the member for Melton on building his brand new house. When you are building a new house, it is easy to go electric at the start. It is probably not as expensive as a retrofit. But unfortunately this is going to affect a lot of people. When the member for Melton builds his new house, he will run his power in. It will all be electric, that is fine. I will just mention this point, though: that that is providing there is enough supply in the street. This is another point a lot of people do not realise. So member for Melton, you will be fine. You will build your house; it will be cheap for you. But the average punter in Victoria – especially people who are elderly – might have an old gas furnace system in their home. They are not great, but there are a lot of them out there. I am not an advocate of these gas furnace systems. If that heating breaks down and that is the only heating they have got, they will probably have to go to split systems under this. You cannot replace that appliance under this bill, so they would have to go to split systems.

I would say in an average four-bedroom home, if you have to go to split systems, you will need six. But let us talk about the elderly person in that 1970s home with the wall furnace. It is probably a three-bedroom home. It has got a kitchen, lounge room, three bedrooms and probably one bathroom. Even in that you are going to need four split systems – one for each bedroom, one for the main area. Four split systems will be \$10,000, a fairly conservative estimate, but I think I am about right. What happens then is that for those four split systems that you have to put into that house, you have to upgrade your power capacity. The problem with that is: is there enough supply in the street? The problem with this bill is I do not think the government realises how many streets in Victoria only have two-phase supply. I can tell you, I had a friend in Kew who got an EV charger in his house. He bought one of those stupid electric cars and put an EV charger in his house. But the guy installing the EV charger and the people doing the power said only another four houses in the street could have EV chargers until the capacity of the street was done, because there was only a two-phase connection into that street.

Here is the problem: when you start talking retrofitting – and we did get clarification that you can replace a gas hotplate with a gas hotplate. That is fine; that is the cheapest item in the house and uses the least amount of gas. But if you are going to start replacing central heating units, if you are going to start replacing hot-water systems and if you go to an electric solar panel hot-water system, that is going to cost you about \$6000. The standard house – not the old person's house but a standard house – will be up around \$15,000 for split systems. The problem we have got is we are not ready for this yet because we do not have the supply in the street to service the homes. It is actually that simple. It is not so much the fact that I disagree with clause 38; the fact is that practically this will not work. Practically we do not have enough supply, and the more things you bring off gas, the more load you put onto power and the more supply you need.

Until we can guarantee that there is three-phase supply in every street in Victoria, this will not work. We are not ready to transition away from gas. It will happen – we can see that – but it is not going to happen today and it is not going to happen in 10 years time, because this state is not ready for it. The government has the idea that you can get rid of gas and go to power, but you cannot. It will fail. It is going to be an absolutely dismal failure. This contribution I am giving to the government is an education on what needs to happen before you can complete the process.

A member interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: I know you have an electric car, and I am ashamed to admit I know you for that. I would love to drive a V8 diesel ute. But let us be really clear about what I am saying here: the average punter in Victoria cannot afford the conversion of their home. That is number one, because if the average person has to all of a sudden go to all split systems, replacing their central heating unit with split systems, and has to replace their hot-water services with electric storage solar-panelled hot-water services – forget the gas hotplates; if you get rid of gas hotplates and go to induction, you have got to buy new pots and pans and there is another three grand – you are up for about \$27,000. People stand up here and go, 'We'll save a thousand dollars a year converting your home to electricity.' It is going to take you 27 years to get your money back, and most people cannot afford it. This is the

problem. The average person in this state cannot afford these conversions. They just cannot. The cost of living is out of control now. Housing affordability is at an all-time low, and if by chance some young person saves up enough money to buy a house that was built in the 1980s or 90s and then the appliances start to fail and they get hit with another \$27,000 to convert their home, that would nearly break them. This is why I do not like clause 38, because this state is not ready for it. We are decades off clause 38, and that is why it should be pulled out of this bill. That is what the reasoned amendment that was put forward by the member for Brighton says: 'Get rid of clause 38, and we will agree with the bill.'

I take on board what the member for Bulleen said earlier about planning. If we want to make houses more affordable, increase supply. It is not rocket science. As far as this goes, with clause 38 out of this bill, it is an easy bill to pass. With clause 38 in this bill, you are going to send Victorians broke.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (16:20): The Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024 makes a number of sensible changes to the Building Act 1993 which strengthen laws governing builders, plumbers and building surveyors. These amendments will better protect consumers, and the Greens support this bill. The bill expands powers to regulate the connection of piped gas to homes and to regulate the installation or replacement of gas appliances.

I will start my discussion of this with a question: what should we do when the fuel most of us are burning to heat our homes is a major cause of climate pollution and Victoria's supply is running out? We could just keep burning it and look for more, which is happening in Victoria, with production permits granted for undersea fossil gas south of the Great Ocean Road, or we could wean ourselves off it as quickly as possible. The fuel I am talking about is fossil gas, marketed as natural gas. It is mostly methane and when burnt it becomes CO₂, but when it leaks into the atmosphere unburnt it is 80 times more potent than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas. Last year's *State of Sustainability Report* found the proportion of Victorian homes with fossil gas connections rose from about 82 per cent in 2010 to 88 per cent last year – over 2 million homes. Over the same period CO₂ levels in the atmosphere rose about 8 per cent and are now at 426 parts per million. The government finally banned gas connections to new properties from the start of this year, but people can still buy new gas heaters, there are no deadlines to get homes off fossil gas and government subsidies for households to replace gas appliances with electric are not getting to anywhere near the number of people who need them to get off gas. We need to move faster:

Extreme temperatures, raging fires, droughts, and epic floods are not natural disasters. They are human disasters – increasingly fuelled by fossil fuels.

No country is spared.

These are not my words but those of António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, speaking last month. Since he spoke about that last month, Florida has had back-to-back hurricanes and Canada has completed its second-worst bushfire season ever; 2023 was the worst. So it is time to stare down the dinosaurs who do not understand the urgency of the fight against fossil fuels and get Victorians off gas as quickly as possible, and the first step is to stop installing new gas appliances. That is cheaper and easier than persuading people to part with appliances they already have. A new heater or hot-water service that burns gas will last for decades and could still be working in the 2040s, long after we need to stop burning fossil fuels. This bill will allow Victoria to prohibit the installation of new gas appliances, and this needs to happen soon.

Climate change is not the only reason that Victorians need to get off fossil gas. Gas is expensive and, because it is linked to the oil price, vulnerable to sudden price increases, as happened when Russia invaded Ukraine. And burning fossil gas in the home causes asthma, particularly in children. Phasing out gas in Victoria requires a program to get 2 million homes off gas and wherever possible to replace gas in industry and civic and business premises. This bill is needed to get homes off gas, and it is a very good first step. Home heating consumes most household gas, and hot-water heating takes up most of the rest. Cooking uses very little. So a vital step in reducing gas consumption will be to insulate

existing homes. It is great that the government have proposed ceiling insulation in their new draft rental standards, but we need to move faster, as the ACT has done. They have a deadline for insulation and dedicated rebates for landlords. Fossil gas is expensive and inefficient for heating.

Burning gas for heat will always lose some of the energy in the gas. By contrast, using electricity for reverse-cycle air conditioning puts three to five times as much energy into a home as was contained in the electricity. This is not a miracle; it is because the heat pumps in air conditioners, fridges and hot-water services move heat around rather than generating it. So preventing the installation of a gas appliance will save energy, cut bills, prevent asthma and reduce greenhouse emissions. According to the Liberals and Nationals in the room, this is a terrible thing. The government has announced that these powers will not be applied to cooktops, which is a pity. It is understandable, because cooktops use only about 2 per cent of household gas consumption and because the fossil gas lobby is campaigning hard for their right to keep ripping people off and trashing our atmosphere. But it is ultimately the wrong call because cooktops burn gas right where kids spend a lot of time – in the kitchen – and that means more asthma. And if it is the only gas appliance you have – just a cooktop – you are paying a lot in daily connection fees to stay connected to a network which ultimately needs to be closed down. It is likely that many Victorians getting a new kitchen will figure this out and avoid installing a gas cooktop. But why disadvantage those who fail to get the message and then change their mind when they see the daily connection fee?

One risk in the move away from fossil gas is that people may shift to wood heaters, and this exposes a gap in this bill. We know burning gas causes asthma, but wood heaters are worse for our lungs. According to Victoria's air quality strategy published in 2022, wood heaters were responsible for 38 per cent of PM 2.5 – that is, very small particulate matter emissions. The average wood heater in Melbourne burns 3.75 tonnes of wood per year, releasing harmful compounds into the atmosphere that can cost more than \$4000 in annual health costs per heater, and that is not just to the owner of the heater, but to the neighbours and people down the street who are breathing it in. Wood fire smoke causes asthma, emphysema, hospitalisations from cardiovascular disease and respiratory disease and premature deaths. With approximately 240,000 wood heaters across the state, these high-emission sources are expected to create approximately \$8 billion in health impacts over the decade between 2018 and 2028 if wood heater usage is not reduced. An additional concern is the widespread illegal collection of firewood, which is damaging many of our forests. So the new powers in this bill should be extended to wood heaters. Again, the ACT Labor-Greens government is beating us on this and plans to phase them out entirely by 2045.

We are working on an amendment for the Legislative Council that would enable the minister to apply this new power to wood-burning products as well as gas appliances. Doing it in this way should enable the minister to exempt isolated off-grid farmhouses, for example, where particle pollution is unlikely to worry the neighbours, but prevent installation in Brunswick, where it is easier to find electricity than to find firewood. Just as with gas, the easiest heater to remove is the one that has not yet been installed. If we know we face a long and difficult task of removing millions of gas heaters and hundreds of thousands of wood heaters, the most urgent task is to stop installing the new ones.

Another one of the many useful contributions in this bill is that it amends the Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017 to specify that proceedings for a summary offence may be commenced within the period of three years after the alleged offence, an increase from the current 12-month time period. This is a recommendation from IBAC's Operation Clara, which investigated former Labor minister Theo Theophanous and found that while he was on the board of the Victorian Planning Authority he had improperly lobbied on behalf of a property developer in return for donations to his daughter's 2018 campaign for the state electorate of Northcote. The government deserves credit for enacting this recommendation from IBAC. One other piece of unfinished business would be for the member for Northcote to refund those donations.

I will conclude by reiterating the Greens' support for the bill and urging Labor to ignore the dinosaurs and to speed up the process of getting Victorian homes off fossil gas.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (16:29): I rise to make some comments on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. Can I say this is quite an important bill because it deals with two key issues that Victorians are facing right now, and they are, broadly speaking, a housing crisis and a cost-of-living crisis. We have heard over many, many months and years the fact that Victorians are really struggling to pay their bills and that they are also finding it really hard in terms of finding a home to live in – whether that be renting a home or ultimately someone wanting to purchase their first home being able to do so.

Whenever we have a building bill such as this, it gives a really good opportunity for the government to bring in policy that is going to make it easier for Victorians. It would be fair to say that some of this bill actually does that, but ultimately it does not fix the supply issue, which I want to touch on shortly. There is red tape, and it is always important to be able to make things easier – things like being able to communicate with your neighbours if you are building a new home, and things in terms of permits and working with surveyors and planners and being able to fix that as well. But the bill does not go to the core of the supply issue, particularly when we are talking about being able to get more homes on the market. If you build more homes, that reduces the cost because there is more supply and ultimately you will then be able to make them more affordable for people to buy and live in them.

When you have a look at our taxation, Victoria has the highest property taxes in the nation. That is going to affect supply each and every day, no matter what you look at. There is land tax, and especially within land tax we have now got a COVID levy that has been applied to that land tax. This means that people that own homes are having to pay yet more land tax just to be able to keep their homes. Of course when you are paying more of these taxes you are passing them on to renters. Renters are already struggling in Victoria without having to deal with that. But the complexity of this is if you are a self-funded retiree and you have a home that you have saved up for, that home that you are renting out is actually helping you to pay your bills. Then all of a sudden you have a land tax bill that has gone up 30, 40 or 50 per cent over the years. There comes a time when many of these self-funded retirees, or people that own these homes, cannot continue to keep them. People say, 'That's okay because they'll just sell them and then someone will buy them and that will put someone into a home.' Well, it does not quite work like that, because there are many, many situations of people that own a home where they have got a number of renters in that home, and that gets sold and a new couple end up in that home, and all of a sudden you have got a situation where you had six people living in a larger home but now there are only two.

The other factor of this supply issue is those who are holding homes to develop them. They want to develop them – maybe knock down a home and put up a couple of units, two or three units or two or three storeys. It gets to a point where, because of the cost of the taxation and the building costs and the labour costs, the project does not stack up. So those people that are owning those homes turn around and say, 'You know what, I can't afford to keep it anymore. I'll sell it.' That block of land and that house, which could have been a situation that had three or four units on it, ends up just being an old home that gets sold to somebody else and you do not actually provide more housing for anybody. That is a supply issue, and that is something that the government has not come to terms with.

The government here in Victoria, which has been under Labor for the last 10 years, have used only one lever to fix the massive debt that they have incurred and that they have delivered for Victorians. The one lever is more tax. They say, 'You know what, if the debt keeps rolling through, we'll just tax people that have something, and then ultimately we'll redistribute the wealth and everyone's a winner.' Well, it does not work like that, because you can only squeeze a lemon so much. When you have run out of juice, you throw the lemon away. That is what has happened here in Victoria with taxation – people have left the state, people have sold their businesses and people have moved on. We see the situation where ultimately businesses are closing, investment is closing and –

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Member for Point Cook, there are less cranes in the sky than there were under the four years of the coalition because we are just not building them. We are not getting those projects over the line.

I will turn to the second half of the bill, which is probably the most important part of this bill. This is quite sneaky by this government, and it deals directly with cost of living – it is the gas ban. That is why I support the amendment from the member for Brighton to amend this bill and take away the gas ban that is going to rack up prices for every single Victorian that is already struggling in a cost-of-living crisis. What this bill does, under clause 38, is turn around and say, ‘Existing homes, new homes, contractors that come in, plumbers that come in that want to fit up a gas pipe in a home – that’s no more.’ Clause 38 says, ‘We’re going to ban gas in your home.’ What does that do? Let us say the member for Nepean has that home and he is renting that particular home out. If he has copped a \$27,000 bill to turn the gas appliances into electrical appliances he does not just go to the bank and say ‘Give me \$27,000’ without some way of trying to pay it back. So what happens is the person renting in that home will be paying \$65 a week to pay off the \$27,000 to upgrade that home.

That is a cost-of-living pressure that every Victorian will face because of the ideology behind the Allan Labor government. They do not understand the mathematics, they do not understand the economics and quite frankly they do not care that people cannot afford to put food on the table. They do not care about the cost-of-living crisis that Victorians are feeling every single day and they do not care about any particular way to fix it.

The most bizarre thing in all of this is the government do not have to do anything and people would be better off. What they are doing under clause 38 of this bill is they are actually doing something to make people’s lives worse. That is the crazy thing. We should be in this Parliament talking about how to make people’s lives easier and better, not make them harder and worse in a cost-of-living crisis. How on earth in a cost-of-living crisis do you turn around to people and say, ‘You know what, convert all your appliances, pay \$27,000 and pass it on to a renter’? It does not make any sense whatsoever. Particularly around heating a home in winter in many areas around Victoria, the idea about gas is it instantly warms a home. It gives you choice. It gives you the ability, again, to ensure that people have those options. We know that according to the St Vincent de Paul reports we have experienced the biggest increase in electricity and gas prices in Australia over the past year: a 28 per cent surge in electricity costs and 22 per cent in gas. Families burdened with the \$27,000 cannot afford this. That is why this is bad. That is why we will not support this part of the bill that has clause 38 that turns off gas in Victorians’ homes in a cost-of-living crisis. That is why we cannot do that. That is why that is unfair for families, that is why it is unfair for Victorians and that is why it is unfair for renters.

We quite often hear the Greens and the Labor Party stand up and talk about young people and how they are going to support young people. This bill does not support young people. Those renters cannot afford another \$65 on top of the rent that they are already paying when we are seeing rents soar because we do not have enough housing stock in the market. The Allan Labor government’s housing statement is a joke. It does not deliver any more housing, and this bill with a gas ban increases the cost of living for every single Victorian. It is the wrong time to do this. It is a bad bill for that reason. It is failing Victorians, and that is why we will not be supporting the bill unless this part of the bill is amended. Therefore I plead with the government to support the member for Brighton’s amendment to ensure we do not ban gas, we give people choice and we ensure we do something rather than push up prices for every single Victorian – Victorians that are experiencing a cost-of-living crisis here in this state.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:39): It is my pleasure to rise after the contribution from the member for Caulfield to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024 and support the member for Brighton in his reasoned amendment. I was part of the bill briefing, and I do appreciate those bill briefings because I would much prefer to talk things out rather than read all about it. However, something became very apparent during that bill briefing, courtesy largely of the member for Narracan, who pointed out the practical implications of particularly clause 38, which is removing gas by stealth. Not only that, but it also could inadvertently make upgrading gas lines and gas

appliances in homes that already have gas appliances a crime, which to anyone that has an inkling of common sense makes absolutely no sense. But he pointed it out, and this is the other thing that I enjoyed hearing about from the member for Narracan, who is, like me, a very practical, pragmatic person: if a 28-mil gas line into the house were upgraded to a 35-mil gas line, under this legislation, that is illegal. Then the person liable is the owner of the home as well as the plumber and gas fitter doing those upgrades.

If you have an ageing home – and to be fair it does not take long for appliances to become outdated or discontinued – given some announcements that were made a month ago or so now, if you are able to upgrade those gas appliances after breakdown, that particular model has been discontinued or you are unable to replace like for like, you do need to go through those upgrades from the street to the connection. To be fair, in the north-west of the state we do not know much about those on-street connections, because we do not have a gas pipeline; we have to use big tanks. Having said that, there is an incredible amount of gas cooktops, particularly given our Malaysian population and our Vietnamese population. I enjoy their food, so I would like to be able to keep cooking with my Vietnamese and Malaysian friends. But upgrading those gas appliances becomes not only very difficult but illegal, inadvertently.

This is what we are talking about when we talk about the gas ban via stealth. You can put out a media release and you can say that, while you have done not a backflip, just a little cartwheel – a round-off, if you will – you are changing your minds. No, you cannot say that and then make it a crime with legislation like this to actually upgrade what was already there, like for like. If we are going to talk about that, let us talk about changing over to electricity. If you are going to upgrade the appliances in your home that run on gas right now, the practical implications of that mean your electricity supply from the street may have to be upgraded as well. That is also incredibly difficult, under legislation that has not been properly consulted on with stakeholders and people that understand these sorts of practical implications for those that are already under enormous pressure: our tradies, who are few and far between, particularly in the regions, and our builders, our plumbers and our gasfitters. Good luck getting one of those in the next three years. It just will not happen. If you put any more pressure on these small businesses and/or subcontractors, they are just jumping off and they are going to big projects literally over the river. There is a mineral sands mine and there are wind farms in New South Wales, and a lot of these tradies will just go, ‘This is too hard.’

I hear it day after day from not only tradies but real estate agents, and we heard the member for Caulfield talk about the pressure this will put on renters. In a cost-of-living crisis, it does not matter how small that rent increase is, when you are struggling to make ends meet already an extra \$5 in rent really hurts. Then when the costs of everything else – Melbourne rental market prices and fruit and vegetables – goes up, that means people cannot access fresh fruit and vegetables for proper nutrition. Diets fall, putting pressure on every health service – our primary health services, our community health services and our emergency rooms – because community health goes down. I just cannot believe the amount of nonchalance that is given to the flow-on effects of legislation that has not been properly consulted on. Then when the member for Brighton moves his reasoned amendment to withdraw and redraft this legislation, removing clause 38 particularly so it is not banning gas by stealth, the government laughs in the face of it.

This is not funny, particularly for people that are struggling during a cost-of-living crisis. If the government cared enough to do something about it, they would have a look at all of these flow-on effects that moves like this make, because they are very, very real. I had someone talk to me yesterday who lives in Fitzroy. We were discussing another issue related to food and fibre production. I was talking about how if you were to change a certain rule, that would decimate the lamb industry and the wool industry. That would put a lot of farmers and growers out of business. The same thing with the Melbourne Market – that will put wholesalers and growers out of business. They will walk away. That takes away food security, and we are feeding the world. But you will have a lot of people out of business and reliant on welfare.

Food producers largely, particularly a lot of our baby boomer food producers, do not have superannuation. Superannuation has not been around that long, and they cannot afford to contribute a lot of the time unless they are having a really good season. We are going into a season now where our broadacre farmers – and you would know this, Acting Speaker Lambert, with your knowledge of the Mallee – particularly in Sea Lake, Birchip and Ouyen, have started harvesting today. When I say ‘harvesting’, I mean some of them are cutting for hay. Some of the crops – and most of them have failed – are not even high enough to cut for hay. If we are putting pressure at every angle on our food producers, on our fibre producers, on people that are in small business or in bigger business even, that then has a flow-on effect for renters, for those that are on a fixed income, for those that are paying gas and electricity bills, for those that might want a building surveyor.

I did have to laugh when I read about building surveyors in this piece of legislation. Again, try and get a building surveyor to come and do any job out in the regions. It takes months, sometimes years, because of the shortage in that skilled workforce out there. It is a real problem not only in the public service sector – I mean, councils struggle to get building surveyors – but in the private sector as well.

What we are looking down the barrel at here is that times are going to get tougher. I hear this time after time, day after day, particularly with the season that we are looking down the barrel at now for our broadacre farmers and the pressure that will be put on our irrigated agriculture sector, with not only the increased costs at market – because that gets passed on. You know who pays that, don’t you? The tenants, effectively – those that are supplying the fruit to those agents. The agents are not going to pay it themselves, do not be so silly. That will get passed on to the grower. That puts them under pressure. They are already under immense pressure with about \$60,000 worth of audits. That is just administration every year to be able to go into these markets and export – \$60,000 worth of audits that are largely all the same, just under a different brand. Those costs ultimately get passed on to the consumer at the end of the day, who – as my friend yesterday told me, who lives in the inner city – do not really care. It does not affect him. Guess what, yes, it does. When you are having to pay \$65 per kilo for potatoes, for lamb or for whatever it might be and you can no longer afford to eat at the Vegie Bar or wherever it might be – I love the Vegie Bar – it affects everyone. You can bury your head in the middle of Bourke Street and pretend that it does not, but I assure you these things will affect everyone at the end of the day.

As far as the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Brighton to withdraw and redraft this piece of legislation goes, following extensive stakeholder consultation on the impact of the gas ban and going through other clauses that cause issues as well, this bill needs to be taken off the table and redrafted as a matter of urgency.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (16:49): I rise to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. We know this legislation, as we have heard from all the speakers, proposes a series of amendments. It will fundamentally reshape the building and construction sector in Victoria. I know there are parts of this bill that we do not have any concerns with on this side, but we do fundamentally have concerns with the way that this will allow Labor’s gas ban to be implemented right across Victoria.

A few of my colleagues have touched on this, but I am going to try and give a slightly different perspective. On the Mornington Peninsula we are coming up to summer, when our population increases dramatically. Already United Energy are out installing diesel generators in paddocks in those major centres because our grid on the Mornington Peninsula cannot cope with the extra power that is needed by all of those people coming down to the peninsula. We are thinking about removing from our current mix a source of energy that provides heating to people during winter and provides the ability for people to cook. We are going to take that away. We are going to charge people who need to go and replace those systems up to \$27,000 without any understanding of whether we actually have a grid that can cope with that extra load being put onto it. I know that for me locally and for all those people on the peninsula we absolutely cannot. We cannot cope with it.

We saw earlier this year when transmission lines came down that this government has absolutely zero ability to keep up their maintenance and the infrastructure to go with those transmission lines. So if it wants to go and pull gas out of the system and put more pressure back onto the grid, has this government got a commitment, when it is putting this in place, to actually add those extra transmission lines and add the extra major infrastructure required to the grid to allow the electricity load to be beefed up? It would currently put more pressure on those coal-fired power stations.

If you want to talk about the emissions and the effect on the environment of this policy, I think we can all agree gas generates a lot less emissions when it is being used as an energy source than do those coal-fired power stations, which are certainly coming to the end of life, and far, far less than diesel generators that are currently being dropped in my electorate. I know that people on the Mornington Peninsula are extremely concerned about those diesel generators being put in. I have gas in my house, and I am proud to say I love my gas heating and I love my gas cooktop. If you are going to make people on the Mornington Peninsula and right across Victoria take that out, you need to make sure you at least have a commitment to upgrading the infrastructure that is going to go with it.

Acting Speaker Lambert, I believe you have an EV. You drive it in here, very similar to me. This place cannot survive if we start to move too quickly away from the way we currently live; we cannot cope. We do not have the ability to charge enough vehicles here, and it is the same at Treasury Place, where a lot of the drivers who operate within this place have to park. We are moving quickly away without a real solution to fix these problems.

I would encourage the government to separate this legislation out. I support the member for Brighton and his reasoned amendment that the gas part of this bill be taken out and that proper consultation be done with stakeholders. But we should also have a broader look at the effect of this policy – what it is actually going to mean when you take gas out of the energy mix and how that is going to affect our current grid without the proper infrastructure investment and without the proper maintenance being put into it. I would love to see the government invest in an extra line to the Mornington Peninsula so we do not have to come over the summer period and drop eight to 10 diesel generators out on farms and in the Sorrento town centre. You can smell them and you can hear them burn. They are a blight on the peninsula over the summer period, but at the moment they are a necessary evil for people to be able to get through that summer period and operate their cooling so they can enjoy it. And this is not just residents, this is all the people, many in this chamber, who make their way down to my area during that time so they can enjoy that summer period.

I encourage the government to go and do its due diligence on this policy before it rams it through this Parliament. Do proper stakeholder consultation and actually understand the effect when you pass legislation that is broader than just some notes on a piece of paper. I support the member for Brighton and his reasoned amendment, and I fully support that we continue using gas here in Victoria.

Chris CREWITHER (Mornington) (16:53): I rise to speak on the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. This bill effectively seeks to implement a gas ban by stealth. Part 2, division 6, clause 38 is the mechanism which will allow the government to prohibit new gas connections or extensions to the capacity of existing gas connections and future installation or replacement of gas appliances. Really this bill represents the beginning of the end for gas, so we oppose the bill for this reason. Like the member for Nepean, I support the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Brighton.

More than half of Victorians oppose the Allan Labor government's efforts to phase out gas. Just a quarter of people support state government moves to phase out gas use. Figures compiled by RedBridge show that 55 per cent of respondents are opposed to the idea –

James Newbury interjected.

Chris CREWITHER: That is right, member for Brighton. Even RedBridge has come up with those statistics, which show that the majority of the Victorian public are against this gas ban by stealth.

This and other measures by the state Labor government are what has led to the latest Redbridge poll again showing that support for Labor has fallen, from 35 down to 30 since June, seven points lower than its 2022 election result. Labor knows this. They know that they have failed Victorians with 55 new and increased taxes on employment, schools, rents and holidays. They have failed Victorians with their eye-watering soon-to-be \$188 billion debt, which equates to \$26 million of taxpayer-funded interest every single day. They know that they have failed Victorians by not maintaining roads. They have failed Victorians and they have failed to support Victorians during this cost-of-living crisis. They have also failed Victorians when it comes to the housing and homelessness crisis we now face.

Importantly, they know that their gas ban is wildly unpopular, and it is unpopular for many reasons. If we look at the statistics and other information that has come out, conversions for home owners will cost up to \$27,000. It is also projected that rent may go up by \$65 a week. Who wants a higher rent of \$65 a week? I know I would not have liked that when I was renting, and I know that many people in my electorate and beyond do not want higher rents.

We have this bill today which does attempt to trick Victorians by instituting a gas ban by stealth. Victoria also faces severe gas shortages in the coming winters, as early as next year. Gas remains a critical supply source for both industry and households. Since 2010 production from offshore gas wells in Victoria has fallen by 70 per cent. No onshore conventional gas exploration permits have been granted in Victoria since Labor came to power in 2014. We also know that these shortages, which are inevitable now, will have enormous economic, social, political and other consequences.

As the member for Nepean noted before, people will struggle. They will struggle to heat their homes, to cook their food. They will struggle with increased bills and cost-of-living pressures. Sadly, this bill will also chill any new investment in gas production. Why would any energy company invest in new production in Victoria when the government is going to ban it and it is doing all it can to destroy its very business case to start with? Even more sadly, the less gas there is, the higher the power bills are going to be, as I mentioned, for every single Victorian, both for homes and for businesses. I note that small businesses as well are often struggling. They are struggling with increased taxes and they will be struggling with increased bills, whether they come through electricity, gas or elsewhere. Victorian small and medium enterprise has suffered enough with a 31 per cent increase in gas prices already – yet another punch for small businesses who employ locals, in particular young people.

I note as well this bill also relates to and supposedly precedes future reforms that will reshape – or supposedly reshape – the building system to protect consumers. Sadly, the building landscape at the moment in Victoria is akin to the Wild West, failing to protect consumers from dodgy builders and developers, like at Culcairn Drive in Frankston South, which the member for Brighton and I visited a number of weeks and which I have been advocating for in Parliament and beyond since 2018. They have been in national media, they have been on current affairs shows, they have been in newspapers, but still this state Labor government have done nothing to help these people – people like Kon, who are now living in their van because they can no longer live in their own home at Culcairn Drive. The member for Frankston in particular as well: I do call on you to take action. This is in your electorate. You need to do something to help these people. These people are struggling. They need support, and it is a matter of time. This government does need to take action. We have situations of windows that can barely open, mouldy ceilings, no soundproofing, leaky ceilings and balconies – in fact balconies that have collapsed. The list of faults we see in new buildings in Victoria and across Australia is seemingly endless. I know the member for Narracan, who is a building expert here, is very well aware of what is happening here in Victoria. This Labor government need to listen to people like the member for Narracan who know what they are talking about, who have that expertise in this industry, and they need to take action.

The SPEAKER: The time set down for consideration of the remaining items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business. The house is considering the Building Legislation Amendment and Other Matters Bill 2024. The minister has moved that the bill be now read a second time. The member for Brighton has moved a reasoned amendment to this

motion. He has proposed to omit all of the words after 'That' and replace them with the words which have been circulated. The question is:

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

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

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (51): Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, 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, Sam Hibbins, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, 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, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (22): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Martin Cameron, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Kim O'Keefe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallance, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

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

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (51): Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, 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, Sam Hibbins, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, 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, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (22): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Martin Cameron, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Kim O'Keefe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallance, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Bill 2024*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

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

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (69): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Emma Kealy, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bridget Vallence, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (4): Gabrielle de Vietri, Sam Hibbins, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pill Testing) Bill 2024*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Danny Pearson:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

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

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (51): Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, 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, Sam Hibbins, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, 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, Nina

Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (22): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Martin Cameron, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallance, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Country Fire Authority volunteer compensation scheme

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (17:14): (871) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place, and the action I seek is a full overhaul of the CFA volunteer compensation scheme procedures and the introduction of independent medical panels to review and guide decisions on complex or controversial compensation claims to ensure fair and due process. I have been approached by dedicated CFA volunteers in my electorate expressing their concern and dismay at a recent decision by the CFA command which is having a serious impact on the morale of these selfless volunteers. The recent decision by the Honourable Justice Melinda Richards against the CFA was scathing of the CFA's actions in terminating a volunteer's PTSD claim. CFA volunteers who have approached me are concerned that unless there is an overhaul of the way the CFA handles volunteer claims, they and their families will not get the support they need and deserve in the future.

One of the volunteers who raised concerns with me has more than a decade of experience as a CFA volunteer firefighter and has attended many traumatic incidents, including house fires linked to domestic violence and attempted murder, a house fire with a fatality, three suicides and at least five road accidents involving a fatality or critical injuries to children. Through his role with the CFA this volunteer has been exposed to immeasurable stress and has sought professional support services to assist him at these times. He and others are now worried that they and their families may not get support and protection if they develop a diagnosable mental health condition linked to their time as a CFA volunteer. Unless volunteers have faith that the CFA will support them, there is a risk that volunteer numbers will decline, and this will have an impact on community safety. On behalf of the volunteers that you represent as minister, please hear their call for an overhaul of the volunteer compensation scheme and the introduction of independent medical panels to review and guide decisions on complex or controversial compensation claims to ensure fair and due process.

Metro Tunnel

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (17:16): (872) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the benefits of Metro Tunnel for the Frankston and Cranbourne–Pakenham lines. The Metro Tunnel is a visionary, intergenerational project. It took an Andrews and Allan Labor government to deliver this

project. To see the stations coming to fruition – Arden station, which I checked out recently with a number of colleagues; Parkville, in the medical precinct, which is so significant for people, being able to access important and critical medical health and support rather than having to navigate through the city during those times of care; and Anzac station and what that will be – is quite significant.

But there was a lot of opposition just a decade ago. I remember newspaper articles at the time criticising this project, saying it would never see the light of day. It was opposed by the coalition when they were in government. It was a Brumby Labor government that left \$50 million for them to claim the benefits of this project and just run with the planning and go, but such was the partisan nature of approaching transport policy that they left this project for dead. It took us coming back into government and acting on behalf of Victorians. Premier Andrews at the time said these might be projects that you start but you might not necessarily get to open, and that is what this Metro Tunnel project is all about: improving the Frankston train line's turn-up-and-go service. And it is for the Keysborough South legends in my electorate who access the Cranbourne–Pakenham line.

It has the eerie hallmarks of the conversations that we see around the Suburban Rail Loop. We do not outsource the needs of the next generation, with growth and development coming into our state and more people choosing to live in Victoria or just the natural growth in our population. We do not outsource transport needs to someone else – the lost time in cars and the mental health and wellbeing impacts that that has from being stuck in congestion and having less time with your kids and your family. On behalf of Victorians, we have always acted in their interests in road and rail infrastructure projects, whether it is the Metro rail tunnel or, as we see, the early stages of the Suburban Rail Loop. For that intergenerational work, someone has to make the decisions, and it is lucky that the Labor government makes decisions in the interest of Victorians. I am really keen for the transport infrastructure minister to update my community on the substantial and massive benefits of the Metro Tunnel for my community.

Glen Eira police resources

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (17:18): (873) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Police, and the action I seek is that the minister works to provide more police resourcing, particularly active patrol vehicles, for the City of Glen Eira, specifically within the Caulfield area.

A few weeks ago my wife was contacted by local neighbours that were getting together a WhatsApp group to talk about the escalation of youth crime, particularly around home invasions that had happened around our area. We have seen a number of incidents that have got to a particular point where a number of our local residents, not just in my street but in neighbouring streets, are putting together funding for private patrols because they do not feel safe. There was an incident only about three or four weeks back where a family with four young girls had six teenagers break into their home in the middle of the night. Mum and Dad were away, and these girls were sleeping. Thank God they were not woken during that time. There were, I believe, five vehicles – it could have been six vehicles – that were stolen. All of the four girls' and mum's and dad's vehicles were stolen from this particular house. What then transpired is police were chasing one of these vehicles and tracked it back to the home, only to initially think that it was one of the kids that was driving recklessly. They came into the bedroom of the girls that were still sleeping, at about 4 am in the middle of the night, and interrogated these girls, only to find out that it was stolen through a home invasion.

This is not uncommon. This is something that we are hearing time and time again. Local residents feel so unsafe – I understand there are three active patrol groups in areas just around my area, and a fourth is now being set up – and all of these residents are saying to themselves, 'Why don't we have more active police patrols? Why is it that we have to have a situation where we are paying private security guards to actively patrol our streets?' These people pay their taxes like everybody else. Why is it that on top of that they are having to take more money to have patrols of their homes because they and their kids do not feel safe?

I do call on the Minister for Police. I would be happy to introduce him to many of these groups that are calling for this. Ultimately we have one patrol vehicle for 150,000 residents in Glen Eira. It is not enough. We have got to get more active police patrols. We have got to ensure that residents feel safe no matter where they are and no matter where they live. It is simply not good enough that residents have to take things into their own hands because this government is failing them.

Preston activity centre

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (17:21): (874) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in a visit to central Preston to discuss the Preston activity centre. As the minister knows, there is a strong recognition in our community that Melbourne needs over time to become a little less like Los Angeles and a little bit more like Berlin. It is a simple fact that we currently live in a city that is one of the most sprawling and car-dependent in the world, and we do not want a future in which the only affordable options for young people or young families are 70 or 80 kilometres away from their workplaces in the centre of the city. If we think about what we do want for the next generation, it is that we want them to spend less time commuting, not more, and ideally we certainly want them to spend less time commuting in their cars.

That brings us to Preston Central. It is on the Mernda line. It has good bus routes. It has the Northern Pipe Trail for those who ride into the city. It does have quite a number of local jobs, as many activity centres do, notably jobs in government – in the Darebin City Council of course and the state government offices on High Street – but also a lot of jobs in retail, education and other fields. And of course it is relatively close and is accessible to the very large Northland precinct, which is a major employment area in the north.

We support more housing in Preston Central for those reasons, noting that it will be entirely within the heights already set out by Darebin council through their structure planning process. There will be no change to them. They max out at 10 storeys at Woolworths and on the non-residential parts of Mary Street, just with the single longstanding exception at Preston Market, where there has been permission since 2017 to go to 14 storeys.

The only thing that could or might change on the height front is the proposal for six storeys in the so-called catchment area. On that matter I think it is important for residents to remember that heights in residential zones are mainly governed by the overshadowing and overlooking requirements, and they will continue to be protected by them. There will be no change to them. They typically limit heights to two storeys. The only way you could ever go to six would be if you had a huge block of 2000 square metres or something. I can think of only one in the entire area – that might be the Bell Motel, were it to be developed – but otherwise we will not see buildings beyond the heights enforced by the overshadowing requirements.

There has been some talk about notice and appeal rights. I understand the only likely changes there would be to stop people appealing things that would never have succeeded at VCAT anyway. Currently you can appeal a 1-metre-high shack on the property next door. Of course VCAT does not uphold those appeals, because that is fully compliant with the residential code. That is the only kind of appeal that would then be unsuccessful. There are other important matters to discuss, with regard to open space, green space, parking and other matters, and we look forward to, if possible, the minister coming out to hear community feedback on those fronts.

Multicultural community facilities

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:24): (875) I rise with an adjournment for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs in the other place, and the action I ask is for appropriate funding for a multicultural centre out in the City of Casey or Cardinia. The Clyde Malayalee group have started a petition to try and get a great multicultural facility, because as we know, those members out in those growth corridors have seen remarkable change in the people from the community, where we have got a lot of new Australians who have come across from India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the Philippines.

And the group functions that they have put my twenty-first to shame. They have hundreds if not a thousand-plus people who come along and celebrate community and what community really is. The events they have are dancing, celebrating, keeping the young people involved, passing their skills across to the next generation and ensuring they do things in their mother tongue – all things that are essential to ensuring a collaborative community that works together.

I know – I am not saying obviously for this – that all members from all sides of this place love going to these community events, because we get to celebrate the best things that are brought to our country from other nations, including the food; we know how great the food is. But it is also the collaborative nature they have in building stronger, united communities, which also has a great impact on crime prevention here in our state by ensuring that the young people have a focus moving forward.

I would love to have the minister come out and join me. We can dance out there and celebrate as we get the funding for a new facility out in the Clyde area to hold something like a thousand people so we can have some great functions.

Albert Park electorate community safety

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:26): (876) My adjournment is for the Minister for Police, and the action I seek from Minister for Police the Honourable Anthony Carbines is to visit my electorate of Albert Park to engage with local stakeholders on community safety issues. The Victorian Labor government has invested \$4.5 billion in community safety initiatives, supporting the recruitment of 3600 new police officers and enhancing resources across the state. While these matters have had a positive impact, concerns about hooning and other community safety issues remain in my community. I have had productive conversations with the minister during previous visits, and I encourage him to return to Albert Park to hear from locals and continue progressing solutions that will ensure a safer community for all.

Solar energy

Tim READ (Brunswick) (17:27): (877) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the action I seek is for the state to require power distribution companies to accept flexible solar exports and to lift the maximum export offered on single-phase connections from 5 kilowatts to 10 kilowatts, as has been done in South Australia. Currently, most Victorians with rooftop solar cannot export more than 5 kilowatts to the grid, even if their system is capable of generating more. The effect of this is to discourage homeowners from investing in larger systems capable of generating significant amounts of solar power on cloudy days and when the sun is low in the sky.

Many Victorians want to run their all-electric home on solar energy for as much of the year as possible using solar panels and a battery. This is easier in the summer months, but demand for power is higher during the colder, darker days of winter, when we switch to heating our homes electrically. For those with the space and the funds, more panels means more kilowatts and less demand from the grid. A lot of Victorians have neither the space nor the funds, but if we encourage those who do to get more panels, they will produce more power during times of peak demand, particularly on cold, cloudy days. Curtailing exports at 5 kilowatts sends a message that there is no point buying anything much larger than a 5-kilowatt system, when in fact much of the value of a larger system is when it is only generating at 10 or 20 per cent of its maximum capacity and still running the aircon, the heating and the fridge.

In South Australia people with a lot of panels can export up to 10 kilowatts, but this is remotely curtailed when there is a risk of overloading the system. The higher limit means that South Australians benefit from more clean energy when it is available from rooftops. Additional solar power, unlocked by flexible exports, can be used to charge community batteries and EVs rather than wasting it. I understand CitiPower and Powercor are currently trialling flexible exports for a hundred households. Given that this is already up and running in South Australia, I suggest that this be made available across Victoria as soon as possible. If South Australia can do it, so can we.

East Bentleigh ambulance station

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (17:29): (878) My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure and Minister for Ambulance Services, who happens to be at the table this evening. The action that I seek from the minister is that she visits the site of the new East Bentleigh ambulance station. Some years ago I had a very good conversation with a group of paramedics at the Brighton ambulance station, where I was told that a significant proportion of their call-outs come from my electorate of Bentleigh. This conversation impressed upon me the need for an ambulance station in the Bentleigh electorate, so like all good local members I got to work, and finally we have broken ground on the new East Bentleigh ambulance station, which will be located at Moorabbin Hospital. If you go past there today – I am an East Bentleigh resident and I go past there every day – there is an excavator onsite as we speak preparing the site for major construction. It is an ambulance station that will include a four-bay garage for ambulances, a rest-and-recline area for paramedics to recuperate and also training facilities. The location, I should say, has been carefully selected to ensure that paramedics can respond faster to emergencies in our local suburbs. I am pleased to say that the ambulance station opens next year. I ask that the minister joins me onsite for a visit.

Fruit fly

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (17:31): (879) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture, and the action that I seek is that the minister reinstate the funding for the Queensland fruit fly eradication program. The announcement that this funding will end in June next year has raised grave concerns in the agriculture and horticulture industries across my electorate. Fruit and veg growers manage fruit fly on their farms but have no control over residential properties or government land. This has been a highly successful program since funding was first made available in 2017. The program has created awareness, education and engagement in local communities. The Goulburn Murray Valley (GMV) fruit fly program has reduced the fruit fly population by 60 per cent across the region, and if supplemented by the release of sterile fruit flies into wild populations, the population can be reduced by 83 per cent.

Local fruitgrowers in my electorate are bewildered and concerned as to how infestation-level migration into commercial crops from backyard gardens and public land will be managed. A single fruit fly detection in any of our fruit and vegetable exports could devastate the horticulture and agriculture industries. Cobram & District Fruit Growers Association president Adrian Conti said of the decision to cease funding:

It defies logic that the Victorian Government is terminating funding for this –
successful and proven –
community-based program ...

In 2021 the GMV fruit fly program won a community award at the Australian Biosecurity Awards. The award, presented by the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, recognised the important contribution the program is making to the quality of Australian horticulture and national biosecurity. The Goulburn Valley is known as the fruit bowl of Australia and, for example, is the largest producer of canning pears in the Southern Hemisphere, with 100 per cent of canned pears, 99 per cent of nashi pears and 86 per cent of fresh market pears contributing to Australia's overall fruit production.

There is serious doubt in relation to the future management and control of Queensland fruit fly, with no commitment from the Victorian government to continue to fund the program. The minister needs to understand the devastating consequences of not continuing to support this program. I urge the minister to reinstate this important funding.

State Emergency Service Aintree unit

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (17:33): (880) The adjournment I raise is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action that I seek is for the minister to join me at the absolutely amazing brand new Aintree SES facility to meet local community members and of course the volunteers there. The brand new Aintree SES facility was built as part of the Victorian government's \$125 million investment in the Victoria State Emergency Service facility infrastructure fund, delivering a variety of new and upgraded infrastructure to support emergency services in the critical work of protecting our community. In addition to aiding their efforts, these modern purpose-built facilities help sustain and encourage volunteers, who assist in managing emergencies including floods, storms and road rescues. I will take the opportunity to once again remind this chamber that Melbourne's west is experiencing major population growth, and it is predicted to increase by 121 per cent by 2030. With growth placing increased pressure on local units to respond effectively, we need investments like this. They are essential. It is anticipated that the unit will respond to about 500 requests for assistance per year in the Aintree, Caroline Springs and Deanside areas.

This modern and well-designed facility, which I have had the pleasure of visiting on a number of occasions, has the capacity for up to 70 members, six motor vehicle bays, state-of-the-art communication facilities, administration offices, a kitchen and a modern turnout space. The facility will help the unit respond even more effectively to emergencies. As I mentioned, I have been lucky enough to have a sneak peek at the facility thanks to Micah Spedding, who is the inaugural unit controller at Aintree SES, and to meet a number of incredible volunteers. It is evident that this is needed in our community, and I look forward to the minister joining me for the tour.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (17:35): I am delighted to respond to the member for Bentleigh and his request that I join him onsite in East Bentleigh to see the progress on the development of a new ambulance station there. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Bentleigh for his advocacy on behalf of his community. Having been out there to that site a number of times already, I am looking forward to visiting yet again. Of course I hope I similarly get an invitation to attend when we open that new ambulance station.

The member for Murray Plains has raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place, and the action he seeks is that the minister undertake a review of the CFA compensation scheme and access to independent medical panels. The member for Mordialloc has raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action he seeks is that the minister provide him with an update on the very many benefits that will be delivered to his constituents on the Frankston line and the Cranbourne–Pakenham line when the Metro Tunnel is delivered by the Allan Labor government.

The member for Caulfield raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police, and the action he seeks is that the minister provide more police in the City of Glen Eira. It would be remiss of me not to remind the member – and I am sure the member for Berwick can add to this – that it is the Chief Commissioner of Police who decides where police resources are allocated, because you would not want politicians doing that.

The member for Preston raised a matter for the Minister for Planning, and the action he seeks is that the minister join him at Preston Central to discuss the way in which our government's determination that central Preston become an activity centre will deliver great opportunities for the very many younger members of his electorate to access affordable housing close to jobs and services, which is what our government is all about. I am sure the minister looks forward to that very much.

The member for Berwick raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and the action that he seeks is that the minister find a way to fund a multicultural centre in either Casey or

ADJOURNMENT

Thursday 17 October 2024

Legislative Assembly

4043

Cardinia. The member for Albert Park raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police, and the action that she seeks is that the minister visit her electorate to meet and discuss matters of community safety with her constituents. The member for Brunswick raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the action that he seeks is that the minister require the distribution companies to enable and allow the export of more electricity to the grid, specifically up to 10 kilowatts.

The member for Shepparton raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture regarding funding for the fruit fly program. The member for Kororoit raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Emergency Services, and I am sure that the Minister for Emergency Services would be delighted to attend with the member the new Aintree SES facility, meet the inaugural unit controller and indeed celebrate our government's investment of \$125 million into the SES infrastructure fund.

The SPEAKER: I thank the clerks, the parliamentary staff and the attendants for their support this week. The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:39 pm.