

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**WEDNESDAY, 3 MARCH 2021**

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## **The Governor**

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

## **The ministry**

Premier . . . . .	The Hon. DM Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Mental Health	The Hon. JA Merlino, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Resources . . . . .	The Hon. J Symes, MLC
Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop . . . . .	The Hon. JM Allan, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Higher Education . . . .	The Hon. GA Tierney, MLC
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Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers . . . . .	The Hon. LA Donnellan, MP
Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services and Minister for Equality . . . . .	The Hon. MP Foley, MP
Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Fishing and Boating . . . . .	The Hon. MM Horne, MP
Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support . . . . .	The Hon. NM Hutchins, MP
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development and Minister for Veterans . . . . .	The Hon. SL Leane, MLC
Minister for Water and Minister for Police and Emergency Services . . . .	The Hon. LM Neville, MP
Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and Minister for Racing . . . . .	The Hon. MP Pakula, MP
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Creative Industries . . . . .	The Hon. DJ Pearson, MP
Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, and Minister for Small Business . . . . .	The Hon. JL Pulford, MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Youth . . . . .	The Hon. RL Spence, MP
Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood . . . . .	The Hon. I Stitt, MLC
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development . . . . .	The Hon. M Thomas, MP
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs . . . . .	The Hon. G Williams, MP
Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing . . . . .	The Hon. RW Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary . . . . .	Ms S Kilkenny, MP

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

**Speaker**

The Hon. CW BROOKS

**Deputy Speaker**

Ms JM EDWARDS

**Acting Speakers**

Ms Blandthorn, Mr J Bull, Mr Carbines, Ms Connolly, Ms Couzens, Ms Crugnale, Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Halfpenny, Ms Kilkenny, Mr McGuire, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Ms Settle, Ms Suleyman, Mr Taylor and Ms Ward

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

The Hon. DM ANDREWS

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

The Hon. JA MERLINO

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

The Hon. MA O'BRIEN

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party**

The Hon. LG McLEISH

**Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition**

The Hon. PL WALSH

**Deputy Leader of The Nationals**

Ms SM RYAN

**Leader of the House**

Ms JM ALLAN

**Manager of Opposition Business**

Mr KA WELLS

**Heads of parliamentary departments**

*Assembly:* Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

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

*Parliamentary Services:* Secretary: Mr P Lochert

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

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

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

## Legislative Assembly committees

### **Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee**

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

### **Environment and Planning Standing Committee**

Ms Connolly, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Mr Morris and Mr T Smith.

### **Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee**

Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Mr Newbury, Ms Settle, Mr Southwick, Ms Suleyman and Mr Tak.

### **Privileges Committee**

Ms Allan, Mr Guy, Ms Hennessy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Ms Neville, Mr Pakula, Ms Ryan and Mr Wells.

### **Standing Orders Committee**

The Speaker, Ms Allan, Mr Cheeseman, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms McLeish, Ms Sheed, Ms Staley and Mr Walsh.

## Joint committees

### **Dispute Resolution Committee**

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

*Council:* Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Mikakos, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

### **Electoral Matters Committee**

*Assembly:* Mr Guy, Ms Hall and Dr Read.

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

### **House Committee**

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

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

### **Integrity and Oversight Committee**

*Assembly:* Mr Halse, Mr McGhie, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor and Mr Wells.

*Council:* Mr Grimley and Ms Shing.

### **Public Accounts and Estimates Committee**

*Assembly:* Ms Blandthorn, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Riordan and Ms Vallenge.

*Council:* Mr Limbrick.

### **Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee**

*Assembly:* Mr Burgess and Ms Connolly.

*Council:* Mr Gepp, Mrs McArthur, Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

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- Communities are concerned about VicTrack land not being maintained and posing fire risks and other hazards in their towns
- VicTrack land can and should be utilised by individuals and/or community organisations to benefit their town

**By Ms RYAN (Euroa) (160 signatures).**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered that petition lodged by member for Bass be considered next day on motion of Ms CRUGNALE (Bass).**

**Ordered that petition lodged by member for Euroa be considered next day on motion of Ms RYAN (Euroa).**

### Committees

#### LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

##### *Inquiry into Anti-vilification Protections*

**Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (09:35):** I have the honour of presenting to the house a report from the Legal and Social Issues Committee on the inquiry into anti-vilification protections, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.

**Ordered that report and appendices be published.**

### Documents

#### DOCUMENTS

**Incorporated list as follows:**

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

*Duties Act 2000*—Report 1 July to 31 December 2020 of Foreign Purchaser Additional Duty Exemptions under s 3E

*Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*—Government response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee’s interim report on the Inquiry into the Victorian Government’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*—Report to Parliament on the Extension of the Declaration of a State of Emergency—11th Report

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994*—Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Service Victoria Act 2018*—Service Victoria Identity Verification Standards

Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board—Report of operations July to December 2020.

### Members statements

#### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

**Ms STALEY (Ripon) (09:36):** 8 March is International Women’s Day. The theme of this year is ‘Choose to Challenge’. Today I stand in the Victorian Parliament as a woman elected to this place, and I challenge the false narrative that women are simply the sum of our body parts. Women are not people with periods or vulva owners, women are adult human females. We make up over half the Australian population. As Baroness Claire Fox said in the British House of Lords recently:

Our laws and words must never treat people as non-human things.

She went on to say:

I am not a uterus holder, nor a person with a vagina nor a chestfeeder. These are linguistic abominations ...

Ms Shing of the other place is reported as supporting the erasure of women as whole personas and the erasure of the female-only role women can have as mothers. I reject this. Ms Shing supports changing the language to make breastfeeding 'chest feeding' and pregnancy 'pregnant people'. Women have far to go to achieve equality in all spheres, including, as we have seen in recent weeks, women's rights to safety and freedom from violence and rape. We should not have to fight about our identity as women.

### MADELINE DOSSIS

**Mr CARROLL** (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (09:37): I rise to celebrate the life of Madeline Elise Dossis. In the historic sitting of the Victorian Parliament at the Royal Exhibition Building in a moving speech the Premier of Victoria spoke about a local girl named Madeline, an intelligent and articulate young woman who we had the privilege of meeting at Essendon Keilor College in 2014. To quote the Premier:

... Madeline was a bright and shining star ... who deserved a bright and shining future.

Through different hospital and community services, her journey represented the fractured approach that just has not kept the most vulnerable Victorians safe, including Madeline. Madeline's family wants our Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System to mark a turning point in mental health care in Victoria, and by accepting all 65 recommendations we are going to make a dramatic difference in getting those with mental health challenges the support they need when they need it.

I want to take this occasion to thank Madeline's family: Karen, Vi, Michael, Stephanie, Katherine and Matt. I want to thank them for their bravery in coming forward and telling Madeline's story. I also want to acknowledge Stephanie for the wonderful service we had at Woodlands Park recently and the \$20 000 that she raised for the Reach Foundation to support young individuals just like Madeline. The landmark royal commission will not bring Madeline back or heal their heartache, but I hope they can find some comfort in the knowledge we are absolutely committed to rebuilding our broken mental health system. Their experience will shape a new system. We owe it to Madeline, that bright and shining star.

### AUSTRALIAN STREET ART AWARDS

**Mr D O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (09:39): Congratulations to Yarram for last night winning the gold award in the highly coveted Best Street Art Trail category at the 2020 Australian Street Art Awards on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Yarram has transformed itself into a mural town in the past 12 months, engaging Mongolian street artist Heesco Khosnaran to so far produce 17 outdoor murals. These murals tell the story of the town, its people and its history. Dubbing itself 'Heesco Town', Yarram has attracted attention from around the country with the murals, which can now be described as 'award-winning'. A national panel of judges described Yarram as 'Australia's newest and hottest art destination'. That much of the work was done in the early stages of the pandemic was also a credit to the town. The judges said:

We love that Yarram pulled up its socks, strapped on its thinking cap and turned to street art as a secret weapon during this period.

Along the way they created hope, joy, a blaze of colour and an Australian first. Congratulations to Heesco and the forces behind the win, Eric Greenaway, Wayne Tindall, Paul Frost and many others that helped make it work, including the business owners who allowed their walls to become canvases. I invite all members, indeed all Victorians, to get down to Yarram and see this fantastic new streetscape.

### LOCH SPORT

**Mr D O'BRIEN**: Loch Sport is another town moving ahead in leaps and bounds. It was great to recently attend the official opening of the new synthetic bowling green at the bowls club, while the newly rebuilt golf club clubhouse will be opened this weekend. These upgrades, which provide new facilities for the town's growing population, along with the boom in house sales and the redevelopment of the commercial centre around the supermarket, Loch Sport is certainly a town on the move.



**WILLIAMSTOWN FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms HORNE** (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (09:40): I recently had the pleasure of visiting the Williamstown Football Club, the Seagulls, and meeting the VFL women's team at their training facility, newly developed thanks to a \$1.2 million investment from this government.

It is fitting for me to also mention that Monday will be International Women's Day. Ordinarily I would be delighted to welcome female leaders from schools in my electorate to this place on International Women's Day, an event I know that my friend the Minister for Women has enjoyed joining in the past. While the pandemic has put that on hold this year, I want to take the opportunity to recognise some incredible women from my community in Williamstown. The Seagulls VFLW players are extraordinary leaders in our community and champions for young women and girls to look up to. The club should be commended for its effort in the accelerated football program, giving young girls access to the training and resources to become better footy players and level the playing field.

**PAULA BENSON**

**Ms HORNE:** There can be no gender equality, though, without the leadership of women like this or Williamstown resident Paula Benson, who was recently awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to people living with ovarian cancer and to business. Paula has served as a chair of Ovarian Cancer Australia and has been absolutely pivotal in changing the lives of so many Australian women touched by ovarian cancer. From the first national action plan for ovarian cancer research to securing millions of dollars in funding for research programs, Paula's own personal experience and the incredible positive change effected by her speaks volumes to her strength. (*Time expired*)

**MYANMAR**

**Mr HODGETT** (Croydon) (09:42): I rise today to speak on the situation still taking place in Myanmar. Since 1 February Myanmar has been without a democratically elected government, as the nation lives under a military coup. The state counsellor, president and a number of leaders have been detained for nearly a month now. Also detained is Australian academic Sean Turnell, whose whereabouts are still unknown.

The situation is deeply concerning to Australia, which is a great supporter of returning democracy to Myanmar. Myanmar is a nation which struggled under military rule for many years following its independence in 1948. The democratic election of 2015 brought hope to a nation that was and still is desperately seeking democracy. The return to military rule is a step back from that goal. The Australian government has called for the release of the unlawfully detained leaders and for the military to respect the rule of law. The impact of this coup is being felt around the world, including by those of the Chin community in my electorate and the Australia Chin Communities Council. We must stand with and offer our support to the people of Myanmar and the Burmese communities here in Australia during these tough times.

**R JOSEPH XIN LU**

**Mr HODGETT:** On another matter, I wish to congratulate Father Joseph Xin Lu on his 20th year anniversary of ordination into the priesthood. Father Joseph is our parish priest at the St Peter Julian Eymard Catholic church in Mooroolbark. He has spent more than half of his time as a priest with us, going into his 11th year at the Mooroolbark parish. Thank you, Father Joseph, for all your service and spiritual leadership and your service to the Mooroolbark parish. We are blessed to have you and wish you well as you continue your religious and faith journey.

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND LABOUR DAY**

**Ms THOMAS** (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (09:43): On Monday we celebrate International Women's Day and Labour Day. Born of the women's equality and labour movements, these two days are extremely significant for me, for all my colleagues and for those who share our Labor values—equality, justice and an abiding commitment to improving the lives of working people.

**MODERN SLAVERY**

**Ms THOMAS:** It is this week that my electorate team and I have committed to learn more about modern slavery and to support awareness raising and action in my electorate. Modern slavery is an umbrella term that includes human trafficking, slavery, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, deceptive recruitment for labour or services, forced marriage and child labour. While often hidden from view, modern slavery denies humans their inherent dignity through exploitation, degradation and control. Poverty, discrimination, civil disruption, weak rule of law and natural disasters are all drivers of modern slavery. According to Anti-Slavery Australia 40.3 million people live in slavery globally—a truly shocking figure—while here in Australia, Anti-Slavery Australia estimates, over 1900 people are victims of modern slavery. It is a wake-up call to all of us in this place to open our eyes, stand up, speak out and make change. A big thanks to my constituent Marg Leahy through her work with ACRATH, Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans, which is affiliated with Anti-Slavery Australia. Marg has been a passionate advocate and is at the forefront of raising awareness of this issue in the community I represent.

**SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT**

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) (09:45): There have been repeated claims about the support that the government has provided to assist small businesses to weather the COVID storm. Yet despite these claims we know many Victorian businesses are in trouble, and this morning we learned that the number of business collapses had doubled in February in Victoria. Why? Because the government has totally failed to deliver on their promises. Angela, the proprietor of a Mornington retail outlet, applied for business support in September. The website clearly indicated that \$10 000 was available for businesses in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell shire and \$5000 for regional businesses. On 1 October the business received \$5000. Upon making inquiries, Angela was told that Mornington was not in the metropolitan area. The department claimed the program had told her that was the case and she was only eligible for the smaller payment. It is a pity the program was not managing the lockdown. Eventually in mid-October the department conceded that Mornington was part of metropolitan Melbourne and indicated they would hear back in a few days. Needless to say, that did not happen. After the involvement of my office, the Mornington Peninsula shire, the Mornington Chamber of Commerce and even the Victorian Ombudsman, and thanks to Angela's tenacity, things started to move, but it was only during the last sitting week in February, more than 4½ months after the application, that the final \$5000 was received.

Clearly the government has no conception of the financial pressures faced by small business. This delay could have been terminal for that business. No thanks to the government it was not, but how many more businesses face closure because the government just does not get it?

**KANGAROO FLAT LIBRARY**

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) (09:46): Last week I was delighted to join in the official opening of the new Kangaroo Flat Library. This \$1.6 million project is a great example of what can be achieved when state government and local government come together and invest in the community. I am proud that through the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program we provided \$400 000 towards this project. We invest in libraries for several reasons: first, because Victorians in fast-growing communities like Kangaroo Flat deserve the best possible facilities; second, because we know the lifelong benefits children and families can get from libraries; and third, because every investment we make helps to

employ local people and keep the economy moving. This is more important than ever as we look to recover from COVID-19.

Libraries are about so much more than books. They strengthen and enrich our communities. They enable learning, personal development and relaxation, and they remain a vibrant, inclusive and much-loved part of our society. Under stages 3 and 4 COVID restrictions, libraries across the state were closed, but they displayed ingenuity, resilience and commitment to their communities, and no less so than at the Goldfields Library Corporation.

This new library is just across the road from my office, so I am very excited that I have seen many people using it already. Whether they are there to read, study, use the internet or just relax, this upgrade caters for the whole community. It is accessible, and there is more room for books and other collection items. We are very pleased to be able to support our libraries with our November state budget—\$56.9 million for our Living Libraries program. This will ensure Victorians can continue to benefit from everything libraries can offer.

### BRUNSWICK ELECTORATE CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

**Dr READ** (Brunswick) (09:48): It is heartening to see an increase in walking and bike riding in the wake of the pandemic. Sadly, the roads are choked with cars again, but active transport still seems to be popular. It is not surprising in my area because more people rode to work from Brunswick than from any other Australian suburb at the last census. But they are increasingly forced onto the roads because the shared paths on the Upfield line and along the Merri Creek are crowded with pedestrians and bikes, and they are narrow paths. VicTrack's Upfield shared path has been blocked by construction around Jewell station for two years now and blocked by the level crossing project further north for almost a year. Construction at Anstey station makes the Upfield path too narrow for bikes, so it barely exists as a viable route. I am seeing more people risking the ride down Sydney Road heading for the safer Royal Parade but also threading their way between the cars and trams on Lygon Street.

The City of Melbourne is installing more separated bike lanes, as is the state government, on several roads around Melbourne but none in Brunswick. Moreland council is giving Brunswick its first separated bike lane—just half a kilometre on Dawson Street. So I call on the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to urgently improve cycling routes in the Brunswick electorate.

### NORTHERN HOSPITAL

**Ms HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) (09:49): Last Wednesday I had the great pleasure of representing the Minister for Mental Health in visiting the HOPE service at the Northern Hospital to formally announce its commencement. HOPE stands for hospital outreach post-suicidal engagement, and this is a new service in Epping. HOPE is a follow-up and after-care service for people who attend a hospital emergency department in crisis or following a suicide attempt. The first HOPE service commenced at St Vincent's Hospital in April 2017.

In its interim report the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recommended that the HOPE service be expanded to all Victorian area mental health services, and this will see the service grow from 12 to 21 service locations. This is a great service for the residents of the northern suburbs and particularly the Thomastown electorate, and I want to congratulate the staff that I met there who were so dedicated and hardworking: Elizabeth, Yvette, Kelly, Sharon, Stephanie and the many other staff that really work to help those suffering mental illness. I would also like to note that most of the staff are women, and now that we are looking next week at celebrating International Women's Day I think it shows how women really do have dedication and do some of the really tough jobs that mean so much and contribute so much to our society.

### GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) (09:51): The hypocrisy of the Victorian state government knows no bounds. This was highlighted in the government's recent announcement of a royal commission into Crown Casino. Whilst this is a much-needed inquiry, what is needed even more is a royal commission into the deadly hotel quarantine and contact-tracing disaster here in Victoria. The recently completed Coate inquiry into hotel quarantine and contact tracing was nothing more than a cover-up and a whitewash, hiding the truth in relation to many key aspects of the government's deficient behaviour. Witnesses should be recalled and all evidence examined properly to determine the answers to many of the fundamental questions that remain unanswered. The collective amnesia that was exhibited by most of the witnesses should not be tolerated.

In stark contrast to yesterday's special sitting of Parliament at the Royal Exhibition Building, I think there is little likelihood of the tabling of the final report of the royal commission into Crown being done in that manner when it is finalised. Rather I expect the government will try to release this report under the cover of darkness with as little scrutiny as possible.

### SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

**Mr ANGUS:** The delays in getting much-needed business support grants to small businesses continue to be a significant issue. Whilst small businesses continue to struggle to get going again after repeated government-imposed lockdowns, the government has been slow to get assistance to these businesses. I would urge the government to ramp up its efforts to assist businesses before it is too late for them. With today's media reports showing that the number of companies collapsing in the past month has doubled, urgent action is needed. The government was very quick to restrict the operations of businesses but is very slow to assist them to recover. This inaction must change in order to properly support struggling businesses, especially small businesses.

### JOURNEY ON WADAWURRUNG COUNTRY EXHIBITION

**Ms COUZENS** (Geelong) (09:52): It was an honour to speak at the Journey on Wadawurrung Country exhibition last week at the Geelong Arts Centre. Journey on Wadawurrung Country is a cultural exploration of the local Aboriginal people and their stories through artistic practice. Together in close consultation with Corrina Eccles, Wadawurrung traditional owner, Ferne Millen, art director and photographer, and Vicki Hallett, musician and sound artist, they have captured the stories of traditional owners of the Wadawurrung land. It is a journey of the oldest living culture through images, stories and sound on country. Sharing culture is a significant way of educating the broader community about the beautiful culture while learning, understanding and acknowledging the brutal truth of the past.

I am proud of the Victorian campaign Deadly and Proud, sharing stories from traditional owners and Aboriginal Victorians, which instils pride in Victorian Aboriginal Health culture, resilience of community and the path to treaty, truth and justice. Deadly and Proud is what the Geelong community can see in Geelong through this Journey on Wadawurrung Country. I want to acknowledge and thank Corrina Eccles, Wadawurrung traditional owner, for her tireless commitment to share First Nations culture and her great leadership of community.

### PAKO FESTA

**Ms COUZENS:** Diversitat Pako Festa Reimagined was launched with a new format to ensure it was delivered in a COVID-safe way. I am proud of the support we provide from the Andrews government to Pako Festa. I was delighted to launch the Pako Festa 2021 alongside the 30 multicultural groups that are featured in the projections on the walls of the Geelong West town hall on Pako. No-one wanted to miss this famous Pako Festa this year.

**SHEPPARTON EARLY PARENTING CENTRE**

**Ms SHEED** (Shepparton) (09:54): For many years we have called for the establishment of a residential mother-baby unit in Shepparton on the model of the Tweddle Child and Family Health Service. Over the years the terminology around such residential units has changed, and they are now called early parenting centres. In October 2020 the government announced Victorian health and family services would be responsible for the \$123 million new early parenting centres to be established in seven locations, being Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Frankston, Casey, Wyndham and Whittlesea, but not Shepparton. The centres provide critical support for parents who need advice and support around caring for their babies. For years now mothers have been discharged from hospitals within days of delivering their babies and often prior to breastfeeding being established. Issues around feeding, sleeping and settling can be very important for young parents to deal with, and a residential support unit provides the setting for these issues to be addressed. Shepparton has all the key indicators which support the need for such a unit, including a high rate of teenage births, poor breastfeeding outcomes and many emotional and behavioural difficulties at school-entry level. We have worked hard advocating for this service. The hard work has been done and it is now ready to fund and build. It will help our community address many of its underlying issues which lead to more problems later on.

**REFUGEE DETENTION**

**Ms WARD** (Eltham) (09:55): I rise to thank a local man, Luke, for his kindness and compassion. Luke met with me last week to talk about his dismay at the difficult detention experienced by refugees held within the Park Hotel in Carlton. The hotel room windows are tinted and their access to the outside world is severely limited. In wanting to help improve their quality of life, Luke, with the support of locals Fiona and Darren, raised money to purchase basic electronics for those detained refugees. Disappointingly, due to an Australian Border Force directive the drop-off facilities at the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation in Broadmeadows closed a few weeks ago. In denying access to these devices border force continue the difficulty these men have experienced in communicating with the wider world, including communicating with their legal representation, accessing online medical and self-care resources, and maintaining relationships.

I wrote to the Minister for Home Affairs asking for these refugee men to be permitted to receive their devices. I am glad to see that almost two weeks after Melbourne's circuit-breaker shutdown ended these drop-off facilities have now reopened. The community I represent has a big heart, and I thank them for their generosity and efforts to help these refugees where they can. I do hope the federal government can come up with a way to work with refugees.

**WELCOME TO ELTHAM**

**Ms WARD:** Kindness and caring for others are common in my community. Welcome to Eltham is a local group providing support to local refugees and people seeking asylum through programs and social connections. They began a number of years ago to support Syrian and Iranian refugees in our community. This year they received a grant through the Victorian government's coronavirus support for multicultural seniors program. The funding enabled Welcome to Eltham to purchase five tablet devices to be shared amongst those they support to provide IT training, with the help of former refugee Phillip, in applications such as Zoom and WhatsApp. I thank the Minister for Multicultural Affairs for joining with Welcome to Eltham last week on Zoom— (*Time expired*)

**ST LEONARD'S UNITING CHURCH, BRIGHTON**

**Mr NEWBURY** (Brighton) (09:57): St Leonard's Uniting Church in Brighton has ignited the spark of compassion. To raise money for the homeless, parishioners put aside \$4 each week as part of the coffee cup challenge. This year the Brighton congregation raised \$10 000. The spark is well and truly ignited, with 12 other parishes now participating in the challenge. Congratulations to Minister Kim Cain and Barry Schofield on the initiative.

**TASKFORCE YOUTH HUB**

**Mr NEWBURY:** Each year TaskForce Youth Hub in Station Street, Moorabbin, helps 1000 young people access drug and alcohol addiction support services. Part of that service includes Reset Life, a free and intensive outpatient program where participants receive wraparound rehabilitation. The hub provides a first step to many young people who both need and deserve a hand up.

**LIONS YOUTH OF THE YEAR**

**Mr NEWBURY:** This year five Bayside Lions clubs have hosted a Youth of the Year Award event. The award is aimed at helping young people develop worthwhile skills. Congratulations to Shaelea Hilliard, who was declared Brighton Lions Club Youth of the Year, and Harrison Huber, who was awarded the public speaking prize. Congratulations also to club members Kim Lowe, Mike Hawke and Ron Smith on the Brighton event.

**ELSTERNWICK PARK**

**Mr NEWBURY:** There has been a lot of activity at Elsternwick Park north. Excavators are shaping a new chain of ponds which will help mitigate flooding and enhance the environmental space. I recently met with new Elsternwick Park Association presidents Natalie Davey and Julie Beatty and site supervisor Marcus Gwynne at the bottom of a future billabong to see the works firsthand, which will convert the site into an environmental wetland of regional significance.

**ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VICTORIA'S MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM**

**Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (09:58):** The release of the report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System was a historic move. It is a first but an important step and will make lasting change and lasting history when we actually adopt all of the recommendations, which we have committed to doing. And it will make profound and permanent change to people's lives. That will be the biggest achievement in this historic move. The mental health of our family, our friends, our neighbours and our colleagues is the biggest challenge we face. The system is broken. It is on us. It is on all of us to do our job. We have an obligation, we have a responsibility, and we must do this.

I want to offer my love and respect to the thousands of people across Victoria, to so many people in my community who made submissions to this inquiry and who have lived experience. To all those I have spoken to over many years, both in my current role and in my personal life, your courage and your experience have been crucial to the understanding of how the system works, or in fact how it does not work. I want to remember also those who are no longer with us. I want to thank the royal commission for its tireless work on this report, and I want to give my enduring thanks and support to all of those who work in this system. You too have suffered for too long. Your dedication has gone above and beyond. The failures of our system have also failed you. This is not my quote, but it is an incredibly powerful one: 'The first step in solving any problem is recognising that there is one', and there is a time to solve this problem.

**BENTLEIGH SECONDARY COLLEGE**

**Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (10:00):** One of the great joys of being a member of Parliament is working with local schools to deliver positive outcomes for local students, and last week I had the pleasure of visiting Bentleigh Secondary College and meeting with students to hear their views on what a future performing arts centre at the school should look like. They are an awesome group of students—superstars in fact—and I thank them for their work. I acknowledge drama captains Ester Rubino and Roxy Hellwege, Zoe Robinson, Bianka Tsan, Jake Murphy, Cristina Pizzolante, Gleb Shvetcov, Maya Thurlow, Holly Pirett, Gabriele Rubino, Scarlett Moss, Georgie Clarke, Stephany Handoyo, Olivia Fitzpatrick and Ben Littlejohn.

The meeting was held in response to the appointment of Haskell Architects to start planning work on this new facility. The students had a number of thoughts about facilities within the performing arts centre that would be essential as well as others that would be ideal. I have attended many of Bentleigh's

productions over the years, including *Seussical the Musical*, *Grease*, *The Wedding Singer* and *We Will Rock You*. Each one has been a stellar performance, and I can only imagine the awesome work Bentleigh Secondary could do with a purpose-built performing arts centre. I am also very pleased that the architects appointed are the same architects who designed Bentleigh's Da Vinci Centre and indoor courts. Bentleigh Secondary College is an outstanding school, and I am very much looking forward to seeing this work progress.

#### WERRIBEE ISLAMIC CENTRE FACILITIES

**Ms CONNOLLY** (Tarneit) (10:01): A couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of joining the wonderful folks at Werribee Islamic Centre for a tour of the Melbourne Grand Mosque. This mosque has been a dream of so many people in our Muslim community and Melbourne's west for over a decade now, and I am very pleased to say that this dream is now almost a reality, with the mosque hoping to open its doors for prayers in coming months. I have to say whenever I am visiting mosques in my local community I am always awed by the incredible architecture. The beautiful archways and traditional interior will make this new mosque a landmark out in Tarneit as a place of both religious worship and community gatherings for many, many years to come.

Not only this but thanks to a \$575 000 grant from our government's Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund as well as a \$650 000 grant from our major early learning facility fund, a community hall and an onsite kinder are also well underway. These two facilities will be open to the broader public in the very near future and are welcomed and much-needed additions to our local Tarneit community. In Tarneit we are home to a very vibrant and welcoming Muslim community, and it is great to see the joy that this new mosque and attached facilities will bring to them. Whether it is the mosque itself, the community hall or onsite kinder, these facilities are going to be open and will welcome the broader Wyndham public. I cannot wait to stand alongside those elders who fought so hard to build this mosque; stand alongside, cut a ribbon and — (*Time expired*)

#### CHRISTINE TIPPETT

**Ms HENNESSY** (Altona) (10:03): I rise to place on the record my deepest respects to the family of Christine Tippett, who very sadly died this week. She was a trailblazing clinician and a very loving mother. She was a grandmother and a champion for women's health. She not only specialised in high-risk gynaecology and obstetrics at Monash Health and worked for 45 years, she was the leader on the expert panel for abortion law reform in this state. She was without doubt a person who has changed the opportunities and options for women not just in Victoria but right across the country in the leadership and the rollout of much of the neonatal documentation and clinical education that she had led. She was a member of the Victorian Honour Roll of Women. She was one of those people who had been awarded an Order of Australia who rightfully deserved to receive one. She brought a sense of the importance of open information for women about their pregnancies, and she was a great educator of people in this place as we dealt with very, very difficult issues. My love and care to her family and to all at Monash Health who worked with her.

#### WESTALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Mr TAK** (Clarinda) (10:04): Last week I was delighted to join the prep to grade 3 students at Westall Primary School for their vision screening onsite at the school as part of the Glasses for Kids program. Thank you to the State Schools Relief and their partner optometrists for coming down to Westall Primary School. State Schools Relief's dedicated work has ensured that vision impairments in thousands of Victorian children have been detected and treated. Importantly the program has introduced tens of thousands of students to the importance of eye health at an early age. Some of the Westall Primary School kids were really excited about their new glasses, which will make a huge difference to learning outcomes for our youngest students. It was great to hear about the difference they will make not just in schools but also in everyday life.

**HUNTINGDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mr TAK:** On another note, a massive congratulations to all the year 6 captains at Huntingdale Primary School. It was a pleasure to present badges to the school's newest leaders. Congratulations again to the school captains, Keitaro and Ellie; multimedia captains Rika, Hector, Mei and Lindsay; environment captains Noemi, Satoshi and Takuma; community captains Jamie, Mika and Lily; house captains Joey, Kenny, Misha, Orlando, Rio, Crystal, Billie and Rebecca; taiko captain Jamie and senior choir captain Jeniytha. (*Time expired*)

**Statements on parliamentary committee reports****PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE***Report on the 2019–20 Budget Estimates*

**Ms STALEY (Ripon) (10:06):** I rise to comment on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report into the 2019–20 budget estimates that was tabled on 29 October 2019. Some might say, 'Why that one?'. We have had a budget since then and a bit has gone on since those halcyon days pre pandemic. But if we go back to that budget, that budget set out the government's approach to managing its finances. It was keen to remind us that with Labor's financial statement in 2018—that is their pre-election statement on financial management—the government at that point was committing to what it regarded as stabilising net debt at 12 per cent of gross state product over the medium term. Now, that was already a doubling of net debt at that point. They were seeking to say that that was okay, because of course they were also maintaining fiscal and debt settings that support the state's AAA credit rating.

Now, since then what we have seen is the pandemic, and the government, like many other governments, has increased debt markedly. But this government, not content to fund the needed expenditure—and we would agree there would be needed expenditure because of COVID—is now more than tripling its debt to \$150 billion, and that means it will have the highest debt of any state in Australia. Unsurprisingly, the ratings agencies took a good look at that, and before Christmas we saw that Standard & Poor's had downgraded Victoria's AAA credit rating. They did a double downgrade: we went from AAA all the way down to AA in one go. Then last week we had the other major ratings agency, and that is Moody's, join in reviewing Victoria's credit rating. They also downgraded Victoria's credit rating from AAA to AA, so we now have no AAA credit rating in this state. The AAA credit rating was something that, following the financial ineptitude and debacle of the Cain-Kirner years, when we lost the AAA credit rating, Victorians have fought very hard to get back; it is something that Victorians are very proud of, and now this Labor government has gone and lost it. They have gone and lost the credit rating.

Now, let nobody on that side of the chamber, the government side of the chamber, suggest that it is all the pandemic, because we can compare to other jurisdictions who held AAA credit ratings in this country. Of course not only has the Australian government's AAA credit rating been reaffirmed by Standard & Poor's and Moody's but, at the same time that we were losing ours here in Victoria because of the government's excessive borrowings, Fitch came out and said that they would reaffirm Australia's AAA credit rating. In fact when Moody's released its document about why it had done this, it said it reflects:

... Moody's assessment that the state's governance has weakened, with policy priorities leading to a very sharp increase in the state's debt burden for a prolonged period, significantly diminishing the state's capacity to respond to future shocks.

What they are saying is we have just gone so hard this time around that, if we get any future shock, whether it is another leg of the pandemic, whether it is rising interest rates, whether it is any other sort of shock that we could get, the cupboard will be bare, there will be nothing left. This government has hocked us to the eyeballs because they have used the cover of COVID. That is the only way to look at this. This is not all about COVID spending. This is about their inability to manage Victoria's finances. I would also note that in fact Moody's said that they would have downgraded our ratings further than