

is handled, but we do support the inquiry. I know that some may have suggested otherwise, but we do suggest the inquiry is going to be an important step, not just here but also internationally. But we do think that the time frames are too tight and will distract resources.

**House divided on amendment:**

*Ayes, 22*

Elasmar, Mr  
Erdogan, Mr  
Gepp, Mr  
Grimley, Mr  
Hayes, Mr  
Kieu, Dr  
Leane, Mr  
Maxwell, Ms

Meddick, Mr  
Melhem, Mr  
Patten, Ms  
Pulford, Ms  
Ratnam, Dr  
Shing, Ms  
Stitt, Ms

Symes, Ms  
Tarlamis, Mr  
Taylor, Ms  
Terpstra, Ms  
Tierney, Ms  
Vaghela, Ms  
Watt, Ms

*Noes, 15*

Atkinson, Mr  
Bach, Dr  
Barton, Mr  
Bath, Ms  
Bourman, Mr

Crozier, Ms  
Cumming, Dr  
Davis, Mr  
Finn, Mr  
Limbrick, Mr

Lovell, Ms  
McArthur, Mrs  
O'Donohue, Mr  
Quilty, Mr  
Rich-Phillips, Mr

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Amended motion agreed to.**

**Business of the house**

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) (15:27): I move:

That the consideration of order of the day, general business, 1, be postponed until later this day.

**Motion agreed to.**

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (15:28): I move:

That the consideration of notice of motion, general business, 399, be postponed until later this day.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Committees**

**ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**

*Reference*

**Mr HAYES** (Southern Metropolitan) (15:28): I move:

That this house requires the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into, consider and report, by June 2022, on the adequacy of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Victorian planning framework in relation to planning and heritage protection, and in particular the committee is to examine:

- (1) the high cost of housing, including but not limited to:
  - (a) provision of social housing;
  - (b) access for first home buyers;
  - (c) the cost of rental accommodation;
  - (d) population policy, state and local;
  - (e) factors encouraging housing as an investment vehicle;

- (f) mandatory affordable housing in new housing developments;
- (2) environmental sustainability and vegetation protection;
- (3) delivering certainty and fairness in planning decisions for communities, including but not limited to:
  - (a) mandatory height limits and minimum apartment sizes;
  - (b) protecting green wedges and the urban growth boundary;
  - (c) community concerns about VCAT appeal processes;
  - (d) protecting third-party appeal rights;
  - (e) the role of ministerial call-ins;
- (4) protecting heritage in Victoria, including but not limited to:
  - (a) the adequacy of current criteria and processes for heritage protection;
  - (b) possible federal involvement in heritage protection;
  - (c) separating heritage protection from the planning administration;
  - (d) establishing a heritage tribunal to hear heritage appeals;
  - (e) the appointment of independent local and state heritage advisers;
  - (f) the role of councils in heritage protection;
  - (g) penalties for illegal demolitions and tree removals;
- (5) ensuring residential zones are delivering the type of housing that communities want; and
- (6) any other matter the committee considers relevant.

When developers brazenly demolished the Corkman hotel, Melburnians were appalled. The minister responsible for heritage protection, the Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, thundered that he would make them rebuild it 'brick by brick'. Now, that was an impulsive but regrettably empty threat. He did not, nor does he, have the legal power to do this. The Corkman hotel vandals got away with it. They escaped with a fine, which does not even cover the extra money they can now get from selling the property as vacant land as a development site. Now, if this were an isolated example of Melbourne's heritage being demolished while this Parliament turns a blind eye, that would be one thing, but it is not.

Here is a list of heritage homes demolished in my electorate alone all due to a lack of heritage protection. Some were demolished while their heritage values were still being assessed. They are: 34 Armadale Street, Armadale; 19 Moir Street, Hawthorn; Forres at 9–11 Edward Street, Kew; 981 Burke Road, Camberwell; 993 Burke Road, Camberwell; 33–35 Huntingtower Road, Armadale; 34 Were Street, Brighton; Idylwilde at 16 St Georges Road, Toorak; 18 St Georges Road, Toorak; 27 Mariemont Avenue, Beaumaris; 17 Nautilus Street, Beaumaris; Breedon House at 34 Were Street, Brighton; 32 Middle Crescent, Brighton; 25–27 Victoria Avenue, Canterbury; 360 Auburn Road, Hawthorn; 368 Auburn Road, Hawthorn; 55 Seymour Road, Elsternwick; 2 Burgess Street, Beaumaris; 46 Rowland Street, Kew, the home to young Gough Whitlam; and 1045 Burke Road, Camberwell. That is just 20 heritage homes in the last few years in my electorate alone, and that is also Mr Davis's electorate, Ms Crozier's electorate, Mr Erdogan's electorate and Ms Taylor's electorate too.

Here I am talking about heritage, but this motion seeking a referral to the Planning and Environment Committee, of which I am deputy chair, is about a broader and at present all-encompassing issue of planning, which I will talk to later in this speech. I want to thank my crossbench colleague Dr Ratnam, also a valued member of the committee, for her initial collaboration in framing the terms of reference and her continuing support in getting this motion before this house and, with the government's and hopefully the opposition's support, getting the issues before the committee.

During my time as an MP I have received many expressions of concern from constituents about the loss of these homes and what these continuing demolitions say about the poor state of heritage protection in Victoria. I have come to the view that a parliamentary inquiry is needed. Some

suggestions I believe require investigations by a committee, especially in regard to heritage protection, and they are the adequacy of existing arrangements for heritage protection in Victoria; whether there should be a federal minister for heritage and a federal department of heritage; whether heritage protection in Victoria should be moved away from the Minister for Planning and have its own minister and its own department; whether there should be a separate Victorian heritage tribunal rather than having heritage decisions made at VCAT; whether developers should be required to pay for independent heritage advice on any building they propose to demolish but not be permitted to appoint the heritage expert; whether councils should have their own heritage department outside the council's planning division, which would promote local heritage and maintain lists of independent heritage advisers; whether penalties for illegal demolitions, such as the Corkman hotel disaster, and illegal tree removals are sufficient; whether buildings which have been altered to some degree still retain ongoing heritage significance and value; and whether the two levels of heritage protection available—significant and contributory—are sufficient.

In this respect, as well as others, we should look at practices in other jurisdictions, which we have done. This is by no means an exhaustive list of heritage issues which we can consider. Other things that have been brought up are whether communities should make some contribution to helping heritage owners maintain heritage properties in some ways too, but Victorians in general are dismayed and even aghast at the lack of heritage protection in this state. It is a matter I have discussed directly with the minister, and to the minister's credit he has expressed his concern about this as well. I am glad to have the government indicating it is going to support this today. I am really very pleased to hear that, and I thank the minister.

Here are some of our residents' thoughts. First, a demolition permit should not be issued without a planning permit. That means you cannot knock down what is there until the planning process has decided what is going to replace it. The current practice puts demolition powers in the hands of private building surveyors, and as I have said to this house previously, the system of private building surveyors is a scam, and it has had a detrimental effect on the quality of our buildings since the Kennett government introduced it and subsequent governments have continued to support it. Heritage protection should not be privatised out to unqualified building inspectors. However, if we required a planning permit or something similar before a demolition could proceed, this would bring councils into the picture, as they should be.

Respected Melbourne planning expert Professor Michael Buxton from RMIT has told me our heritage system is ineffective compared to that of many other countries. He said there is no proper consideration of precincts and that the system relies on the use of the heritage overlay, which he considers a flawed process. Overlays omit too many important areas and buildings. The process is costly and cumbersome and the overlay provisions are weak. Constituents have suggested we look at the heritage provisions in the UK or Canada or New Zealand. Some have noted that in jurisdictions like New South Wales heritage is part of the environment department.

And heritage is not just about old buildings. There is cultural heritage. Some buildings are not architecturally special but have significance due to their place in history. Then there is Indigenous heritage, and I am concerned about the heavy-handed force used to ensure the destruction of significant Indigenous trees as a consequence of the Western Highway extension. Earlier this year the federal government for the second time rejected an application to protect these trees, and I hear there has been some success in a court today but I do not have all the details here.

And there is context too in relation to landscape. In the case of some of the homes in Toorak which are at risk of demolition, it is not so much the home as the loss of the magnificent grounds and gardens which needs to be prevented. One of my constituents, former TV presenter Ilona Komesaroff, has collected the signatures of over 600 Toorak residents on a petition demanding an end to the destruction of local heritage by developers.

The United Kingdom's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* sets out four groups of heritage values. One:

Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Two:

Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present ...

Three:

Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

And four:

Communal value: the meanings of a place to the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

My constituents see little evidence of these sorts of values being seriously applied on the ground. Ms Dasha Kopecek from Box Hill advised me of a case in Box Hill where she said that the heritage officer employed by the developer presented a biased, ill-informed heritage perspective, unsurprisingly intended to support the developer. The council heritage officer did not attend a planning forum designed to give residents a chance to discuss the heritage significance of the site. The council officer who did attend and chaired the meeting was unable to summarise the heritage officer's long and technical report. Few people—residents or council staff—would have actually read his report. VCAT appears ill-equipped to deal with complex heritage matters and has a poor history of dealing with residents' concerns. Bernadette Pierce from the Save Glen Eira group said their members are concerned about the effect on heritage buildings of large developments carried out adjacent to them. Overshadowing, access to sunlight, wind issues, changes in the watertable and so on can negatively affect heritage buildings, causing distress and expense for their owners.

Last year the National Trust released a document concerning federal heritage priorities. They pointed out that Australia's heritage creates a unique identity, a sense of place and a strong reminder of our proud history. Our heritage places, from buildings to landscapes, from songlines to character areas, from trees to shipwrecks, all represent our story—the story of our people and our shared connections. They said Indigenous cultural heritage continues to be at risk from incremental destruction and the cumulative impact of large-scale landscape change. Government heritage departments at all levels are underfunded and under-resourced. The ongoing loss of trade skills in heritage leaves heritage places vulnerable to poorly executed repairs and conservation work.

They advocated a program of accredited job skill training to boost the traditional heritage trade skills. They advocated more effort to protect, conserve and celebrate Australia's heritage. Also, last year the National Trust's Kristin Stegley had an opinion piece published in the *Age* titled, appropriately, 'Governments only pay lip service to heritage'. She said there is a failure to appreciate how heritage contributes to social cohesion and to vibrant, prosperous and healthy communities. She is right. Governments have not done enough to promote social cohesion in recent times, and we could use all the social cohesion we can get right now. She also referred to an editorial in the *Age* which called for the buck-passing between state governments and councils over heritage protection to stop. The *Age* is right of course. Both government and councils have a responsibility to protect heritage, and as you can see from the list of demolitions I read out earlier, they are failing to discharge it, and property speculators benefit from this failure in responsibility.

Residents in Boroondara are strongly supporting my campaign for a parliamentary inquiry. Sandra Alexander, Rose Blanden and Christina Branagan from the Boroondara Group for Advocacy and Protection described the changes to the statewide Victorian planning provisions introduced by amendment VC148 in July 2018, just two years ago, as an alarming development which threatens heritage and residents' rights through exempting notice requirements and the like. As an example, they

pointed out that a local house had recently been approved for contributory heritage protection after a huge community campaign. Then the owners made a planning application to council which would seriously degrade the heritage elements, and due to amendment VC148 local people were not informed, nor does council have to consider their objections as part of the decision process. A second example is a house and garage with an individually significant grading. The owners could subdivide that land, build a fence, demolish the garage or sell the land as a development site, and local residents would be given no notice and have no rights of objection.

They have also raised the issue of VCAT with me. They say that VCAT has become increasingly focused on whether a heritage property has had alterations. This is increasingly being used as a reason to deny heritage protection, yet there is nothing in the guidelines or regulations to support this approach. The fact is that all heritage places have been altered in some way over the years. It is a part of their heritage, and it is what happens all around the world. The claim of alterations was the claim made by developers who developed two century-old buildings in Burke Road, Camberwell, on either side of the Victoria Road intersection, but minor alterations should not destroy the case for heritage protection.

The Boroondara residents also raised the issue of facadism. Planning guidelines are supposed to discourage the demolition of buildings except for their facade, but increasingly places of heritage value are being all but demolished in this way.

In Bayside residents have been concerned about the demolition of unique mid-century heritage. The award-winning Breedon House in Brighton, designed by Geoffrey Woodfall and built in 1966, was demolished in May this year after being refused an interim protection order because it was considered not to be under immediate threat. In the same week a mid-century home in Nautilus Street, Beaumaris, designed by the architect Charles Bricknell, was demolished despite objections from the National Trust and the community group Beaumaris Modern. Beaumaris Modern president Fiona Austin described that week as ‘devastating for our architectural heritage’. She has advised me that Heritage Victoria denied an application by them for an interim protection order after a phone call was made to the owner of Breedon House. Apparently Heritage Victoria was reassured by phone that the owner had no immediate plans to demolish the house, so they did not put a protection order on it. But the owners demolished it the very next day. What a farce. And what does it say about the effectiveness of Heritage Victoria?

The National Trust chief, Simon Ambrose, said:

Mid century homes are an important part of our history and utilised groundbreaking construction methods, innovative approaches to open-plan living and connections to the landscape.

The battle goes on. In August Hawthorn residents launched a campaign to save a 1916 Queen Anne federation villa in Berkeley Street which is at risk of being sold, having been passed over in a heritage study, and a modernist home in Tannock Street, Balwyn North, designed by renowned Melbourne architect Robin Boyd in 1949, was also at risk of being listed for sale in August—and what is more, it is being advertised as a redevelopment opportunity. Professor Philip Goad, a professor of architecture at the University of Melbourne and a board member at the Robin Boyd Foundation, says that more than 60 years later the building is still virtually intact. In mid-October we learned of plans to tear down four period homes in Hampton and replace them with a three-storey apartment block with 36 apartments. Apparently we do not have enough apartments. Changes to the residential zones which allow multi-unit developments in older areas where previously only two new dwellings on a block were allowed have accelerated the market-driven destruction of our heritage.

And it is not just private developers who are the culprits when it comes to heritage destruction. The state government’s Level Crossing Removal Project has been removing a lot more than level crossings. The Upfield line project destroyed trees at Moreland station that were more than 100 years old and destroyed the historic Munro Street signal box despite the objections of hundreds of local residents and the Coburg Historical Society. The fact is that heritage matters. The fact is we are failing

in our duty to protect it for the enjoyment of this generation and the ones who come after, and we need an inquiry to produce ways we can lift our game and do better.

So far I have been speaking about heritage protection, but the motion goes to a number of other important issues concerning the Planning and Environment Act as well. The first of these is the high cost of housing, and I know I am not alone in being very concerned about the high cost of housing. The extent of homelessness and rough sleeping in Melbourne is unacceptable. It is shameful. It is worthy of note that the state government was quite able to find accommodation for our homeless people when it became a public health issue due to the coronavirus pandemic. Let us learn from this and take the opportunity to get fair dinkum about putting an end to homelessness. On our road to recovery from the pandemic I believe that it would serve Victorians better in the light of the near future if public money was being spent on social housing, which might give homeless people a break and also employ local builders, rather than huge, environmentally damaging infrastructure projects.

The inquiry would also look at environmental sustainability, vegetation protection, mandatory height limits, minimum apartment sizes, protecting the green wedges, the urban growth boundary, concerns about VCAT's role, third-party appeal rights and ministerial call-ins. These issues are all fundamentally important to me and to our party, Sustainable Australia. I have spoken about them many times in the past couple of years. Last year I put forward a private members bill concerning mandatory height limits and restricting VCAT appeals. The bill was narrowly defeated in this place, and I believe it is a great pity for our state because it would have reshaped planning in Victoria and given citizens a much greater say in important planning issues.

This year has shown more than any other since the Second World War how much we depend on social cohesion and people being prepared to act for the good of the community rather than simply pursue their own personal interests. We politicians are much more likely to get that cooperation and support if people know they are being listened to and have a stake in the results. In the area of planning, the community is only involved in a token manner. Property developers have the ear of governments and are far too close to them and, as we have seen many examples of lately, improperly close to them. Governments have been imposing ever-denser populations in Melbourne to satisfy the development industry, often against the express wishes of the community. Now we are faced with a time of change—an unmitigated disaster but an opportunity too. We need to learn the lessons of the coronavirus pandemic and a lesson which we learned in the past but have forgotten.

Right around the globe population density has been a contributor to disease and death. We are witnessing a revolution in working habits, and we must rethink our planning and transport systems. Will more public transport be necessary now, or will more and more freeways continue to be seen as the answer to ever-increasing density? Will ever-increasing density everywhere be seen to be desirable again? To property developers of course yes, but will the general public want to go along with them again? CBD office space is now empty, and it is a long way back from here.

It is time for a rethink of *Plan Melbourne*, which was written by the true believers that bigger and denser is always best for everyone, especially property speculators. And it is time for a rethink of the planning and environment legislation, which could possibly turn its focus away from an overwhelming concern with higher density and focus its attention on community health, community wellbeing and of course our precious environment and what we value about the past. All of these are primary concerns to local residents but are rarely taken into account in planning decisions under this much-corrupted act. I commend this motion to the house.

**Mr TARLAMIS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) (15:52): I rise to speak on the motion moved today by Mr Hayes, which requires the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into, consider and report by June 2022 on the adequacy of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Victorian planning framework in relation to planning and heritage protection. I will not list the large number of items in the motion as Mr Hayes has outlined that and it is quite extensive.

In rising to speak on this motion I begin by saying the Victorian planning system is a pillar of our state's livability and it is important and critical that we get it right. Planning decisions affect the lives of all Victorians, with the capacity to have a significant impact on local communities, the environment, key industries and the broader economy. Unlike many other regulatory systems, planning has many users and it affects Victorians in one way or another. However, it can be difficult to understand, the framework and terminology used in the planning system can be very intimidating for the wider community and it can be hard to navigate and follow. Therefore we support the need for better understanding of the adequacy of our planning system in addressing the challenges associated with this motion, and that is why we will be supporting this motion today.

Having said that, I think that it is important to basically put on the record a number of initiatives that the government have taken and are taking with regard to the planning act—the things that we have been doing—and what the act currently does. Our planning system is based on key principles of positive community outcomes, enhancing our livability and balancing the environmental, social and economic needs of all Victorians while managing population growth, land use and development across the state. The objectives of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 seek to provide for the following: the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land; the protection of natural and man-made resources; a pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians; the protection of buildings and places that are of significant aesthetic, architectural historical and cultural value; the orderly provision and coordination of public utilities and facilities for the benefit of the community; the facilitation of the provision of affordable housing; and, importantly, to balance the present and future interests of all Victorians. Effective planning processes are essential for preventing inappropriate land uses and development and for giving the community confidence and certainty in the system. *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* and the eight regional growth plans set the policy direction for Victoria's future growth development and prosperity for the short and medium term.

With regard to housing—and I noticed Mr Hayes talked about housing a lot in his contribution—housing and homelessness and affordability and rough sleeping is a significant issue which is of importance to so many people. I know many people in this chamber, in this Parliament and in the wider community are very interested in this issue. The Legal and Social Issues Committee have got a homelessness inquiry going at the moment, and we have been spending a lot of time through that inquiry going out into the community and talking with service providers, individuals and people who are at the coalface, as well as individuals that are accessing or are trying to access the services, to see the ways in which things can be improved and the ways in which we can address these sorts of issues. I know a lot of members have been advocating for a long time in this space, and we look forward to bringing forward a report to this place in due course which will contain a series of recommendations which will hopefully address a series of these issues and look at ways in which we can address these. I will touch on some of the things that we have been doing in that space to date.

Our planning system ensures that housing remains affordable for all Victorians through a range of measures, such as providing an adequate supply of land for housing, streamlining planning rules to reduce the delays in new housing approvals and facilitating the provision of affordable housing. We have released 100 000 new lots in the growth areas through the work of the Victorian Planning Authority, and we will be releasing an additional 50 000 lots in this term.

In 2018 the government amended the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to include the facilitation of affordable housing as an objective of this act. We introduced the definition of 'affordable housing' in the act. We affirmed that the responsible authorities can enter into agreements with landowners and others under section 173 of the act for the provision of affordable housing. These reforms encouraged the negotiation of voluntary agreements for the provision of affordable housing as part of the development applications.

To support the councils in negotiating voluntary agreements, the Minister for Planning also announced a suite of initiatives, including active communications and engagement about all aspects of affordable housing agreements, subsidised short courses to support council officers to understand affordable

housing issues and a \$500 000 grants program to support councils to progress affordable housing agreement negotiations by providing access to expert professional advice and support to assist in agreement negotiations. These reforms give councils the framework and support that they need to deliver affordable homes so that hardworking families across Victoria can get the safe and secure house that they need.

The Minister for Planning has also recently announced the launch of a development facilitation program to fast-track priority projects that meet specific criteria, including investment certainty, positive short- to medium-term economic impact, job creation and the contribution to broader social objectives like affordable housing and emissions reduction. He has also recently announced a number of approvals for other housing projects as well. I will not go through the list of some of those.

As part of the Homes for Victorians program the Minister for Planning also undertook an inclusionary housing pilot of six surplus government land sites in Boronia, Broadmeadows, Parkville, Wodonga, Noble Park and Reservoir. The pilot will deliver a mix of social, affordable and market housing, including 100 new social housing homes, which will be delivered in partnership with several registered housing agencies. We will have more to say in this area in due course as well.

**Sitting suspended 4.00 pm until 4.19 pm.**

**Mr TARLAMIS:** I was about to make a contribution with regard to environmental sustainability and vegetation protection. The planning system encompasses the Victorian government's environmental objectives and incorporates vegetation, biodiversity and environmental protection requirements established by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the EPA and all other relevant authorities. *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* recognises the importance of protection of our water sources, waterways, green spaces, biodiversity conservation and a sustainable approach to waste and resource recovery. It was updated by our government in 2017 to strengthen the focus on climate change, energy efficiency and the future supply of affordable housing. Our response to climate change mitigation and adaptation reflects targets adopted by Victoria for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and renewable energy generation. In terms of protecting native vegetation, the planning system recently included new regulations to provide better protection for Victoria's sensitive native vegetation.

The Victorian planning system provides for some of the broadest third-party notice and appeal rights across the country, covering most developments. Our current planning system actively encourages participation from the community and enables the community to provide input into the potential effects of a proposal. This ultimately leads to better outcomes and decision-making with closer scrutiny, and those community rights have been protected by our government in the planning system.

In terms of heritage, heritage protection in Victoria is delivered through two levels, with a separation of responsibilities between the state and local governments. The role of the state government, through the work of Heritage Victoria and the Heritage Council of Victoria, is to protect and conserve places and objects of state-level heritage significance. Heritage Victoria is responsible for the administration of the Heritage Act 2017, which establishes the Victorian Heritage Register, which lists places and objects of state-level heritage significance, but the government supports all attempts to improve local councils' protection of heritage as well and will support any initiatives in that way. I know a lot of members want to make contributions on this motion, so I might leave my contribution there and just repeat that we will be supporting this motion.

**Dr RATNAM** (Northern Metropolitan) (16:21): I rise to speak in support of this inquiry referral today. In fact I was pleased to be able to work with my crossbench colleague Mr Hayes on developing the terms of reference for this inquiry. Mr Hayes and I share a mutual interest in Victoria's planning system and also share a desire to improve it. While we do disagree on some of the changes we would like to see made to the system, we agree on the fact that the system is broken, that it is no longer working for the Victorian people or delivering the kind of suburbs and communities we want to see.



When I first became a local government councillor I never expected that I would develop such a keen interest in urban planning. I am a social worker and had spent more time thinking about what goes on in people's heads and minds than the design of the apartment block they lived in. But I soon came to learn that the two are more connected than I had previously realised. I came to understand that the shape of our neighbourhood has a profound impact on our wellbeing. For instance, does our home have enough space and light to live in? Does it have access to fresh air and green space? Is it affordable? Is it insulated enough so that I can keep it cool during a heatwave or warm during the chill of winter?

This struck me the most at one urban planning committee meeting I was at at Moreland when we were considering yet another application for some poor-quality apartments. We were briefed that the bedrooms indeed had windows but the kind that were so high up on the wall, thin, long slits to allow some light to come in but that you could not look out of, and that was to stop overlooking. A fellow councillor leaned over to me and said, 'You know what we're doing? We're consigning a generation of young people to grow up in bedrooms that they can never look out of', and that really filled me with sadness. You see, the developers had come up with a nifty way to meet their obligations without building something that was actually livable, and they got to do this because the rules allowed it.

That rule book is our planning system, and it is in dire need of review. We have let big property developers run riot through our communities, manipulating our planning rules to maximise their profits. Residents' visions of their suburbs with green space, affordable housing and local heritage have been steamrolled, and developers have been able to go permit shopping at VCAT and overturn council decisions. Imagine instead a planning system that meant that new homes were sustainable, affordable, livable and what the community wanted their neighbourhoods to be. It is not a pipe dream. We can change it for the better with political will, and that is why the act needs to be rewritten. The planning framework needs to be revitalised to meet the needs of the future, which is why we need an inquiry to undertake a deep dive into the system, identify big weaknesses and reinvent it so that it delivers the outcomes that our local communities want and need. While an inquiry itself will not fix the system, it is an important step in the journey to do so.

I would like to speak to a few aspects of the terms of reference and highlight some of the areas that I hope the inquiry will thoroughly investigate. Firstly, I am pleased that this inquiry will be focusing on the role the planning system plays in creating more affordable housing. We all know Victoria is in a housing crisis. Our public housing system has been neglected for decades and we now have over 100 000 people on the waiting list. People are struggling to make ends meet while paying high proportions of their income in rent. Instead of promoting and creating more affordable housing, we have seen more houses and apartments being built that are not affordable, are too small to live in and are totally unsustainable.

Our planning system could be doing so much more to force developers and governments to invest in affordable housing. We could be introducing mandatory inclusionary zoning, for example, where a developer needs to set aside part of the development for affordable housing. When developers can buy up land on the cheap and then turn it into luxury apartments to sell at enormous profits there is no reason they should not also be able to set aside some part of their development for public and community housing. It is little wonder that we are in the housing crisis we are in when governments have tried to argue that they have no role in providing public housing but have then created no incentives in the system for developers to fill the gaps. The Greens of course believe that the government should also be a provider of housing, just like they provide other social infrastructure, but when our system is so heavily dependent on the provision of private housing then developers should also be responsible for creating more affordable housing, especially when they have wreaked enormous profits for so many years.

The inquiry will also consider environmental sustainability and vegetation protection. We know that our cities and suburbs are already feeling the effects of climate change and that the severity of climate change will only increase if our governments continue to fail to act on it. Our summers will continue

to get hotter, longer and drier. We will see more extreme weather and more bushfires, and our suburbs will experience the urban heat island effect. This is when our cities start to cook with heat because of the amount of concrete in development not being matched with enough open space and trees, which help keep our cities cool. When there are not enough incentives for new developments to be sustainable or efficient then we risk creating communities that are not prepared for the next few decades. We need tough minimum energy efficiency standards for our homes so that they can stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and we need these mandated in our planning system. We need more trees and gardens to limit the urban heat island effect, not more concrete jungles that make our suburbs bake through the summer.

I also wanted to touch on the importance of open and green space in our communities, especially in light of the strange year we have all had. For those of us who have spent the majority or all of this year at home it has been harder if we live in apartments that have no balconies or if there are no parks within easy distance. All of us should be able to enjoy open and green space at home or close to home, and our planning system should be ensuring that we can by not allowing developers to buy their way out of their obligations to provide green open space. The Greens also want better protection of our green wedges and stricter rules on how frequently the urban growth boundary can be reviewed or changed, and I look forward to considering this further in the inquiry.

The inquiry will also look at how our framework could be delivering certainty and fairness in planning decisions for communities. I have spoken in this place about the frustration and disappointment our councils and communities feel when their vision for their local area is so easily overridden and overturned by the system, when developers can just go to VCAT and get a decision made in their favour or when the minister can call in the permit and take control of a project away from councils. The local community should be front and centre in our planning system, not the profits and greed of property developers. This inquiry must consider the reforms needed to stop developers from gaming the system, for example by reforming the VCAT appeals processes or improving consultation on ministerial call-ins.

This inquiry will also consider heritage and how our planning system is currently failing to adequately protect it. I am sure many of us in this place have been contacted by constituents devastated that sites of local significance have been destroyed by urban development and where their local planning schemes could do little to stop it. I would also note that heritage extends beyond colonial Victorian architecture and includes the natural and cultural heritage that our First Nations communities have protected and cherished for centuries. This week we saw the destruction of heritage on Djab Wurrung land, where a sacred directions tree was destroyed to make way for a road. Any reform of the planning system must ensure that First Nations cultural and spiritual heritage is included in a heritage protection scheme, and I hope that this inquiry will acknowledge this in its work.

I would like to conclude by noting that the impact of the COVID restrictions has clearly shown just how important good planning is. Good planning ensures people have access to green spaces, livable homes and good local services. It makes our homes livable and safe. It means we can easily access local services and shops and it means we are able to enjoy parks and gardens close to home. When we have all spent more time this year at home confined to our immediate suburbs it has given us many opportunities to think about the shape of our local communities and what kind of home we want to live in, and reforming our planning system so that it prioritises people over profit will help create the suburbs and neighbourhoods and communities we really want to live in. I am very pleased to support this inquiry as a big first step towards widespread reform of planning in Victoria.

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (16:30): I am pleased to rise and make a contribution to this debate on Mr Hayes's motion to establish an inquiry of the Environment and Planning Committee and have that report by June 2022 on the adequacy of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Victorian planning framework, especially in relation to planning and heritage. Now, I note that this is a long motion. There are many different parts of it. Most we agree

with, some we are less excited about, but the general focus of a proper review of these planning aspects is something that the Liberals and Nationals support.

We have long been concerned that the quality of life in Melbourne is being damaged. We have had very significant population growth, and although that has paused under COVID in recent months, there was huge population growth going back to the turn of the century. It is probably well in this house today to actually give some background to this. Victoria's population lagged the national growth rates until 1997. Through that period under the Kennett government there was a significant turnaround in the state, and net interstate migration reversed for the first time in about 30 years to a net positive in 1997. Through the period beyond that—most of the 2000s and the period from 2010 through to 2020 until COVID—Victoria had very significant population growth. We had overseas migration and we had very significant interstate movements as well.

Whilst on one level we strongly support increased population growth, at the same time this has got to be moderated and balanced, and it has got to be supported by appropriate infrastructure. At the 2010 election the then Premier admitted that one reason he had lost government in 2010 was because he had not kept up with the need for infrastructure—those are his words, not mine—and because the previous government, the Brumby government, had not maintained infrastructure support for the enormous population growth that had occurred, and I think that is true.

We as a coalition have been in power for four years of the last 21 years, and indeed the lack of infrastructure, the slow provision of infrastructure to match population growth, is a very significant challenge. We strongly support more infrastructure to get the balance right, and there is significant catch-up to do. Whether it is in my own portfolio of transport infrastructure, it is very clear that there is huge catch-up still to be done.

But what has often occurred is huge population growth in a way that has not seen the provision of proper education and health and other services match it, and people naturally become very agitated. And there is the loss of green spaces, the loss of vegetation, the loss of the ambience of streets. We know the story in our suburbs. Mr Hayes and I share, along with Ms Crozier and others, Southern Metropolitan Region. We understand the strong strengths of that region, but many of those are under threat from excessive and poorly thought through development. And we see what happens in what can often be a grand old street or a very good streetscape: first one house is pulled down, and then a dense, unattractive set of flats—let us call them what they are: apartments, units, flats in the old parlance—are built. The building goes close to the boundary. I am thinking about one where I walked on Sunday in Walpole Street in Kew, a grand old house. Two large blocks were knocked over and now there is a very, very dense development with tiny box trees at the front—no canopy to protect from heat. Whatever your view on global warming is, let me tell you one thing: if you chop down the trees in the suburbs and you have concrete and bitumen and tin, it gets hot. Those trees have a very significant impact on our suburbs, not only protecting the ambience and the quality of life but also moderating the temperature. So I say we need to be very careful.

What often happens in these streets is one starts and it makes no great difference to the street, because it is only one property in a long street which has got some canopy trees in the nature strip but canopy trees all around as well. Then what happens is there is a cascade down the street and then on the other side, and then three to five years later there is a huge change in the street. The street is no longer recognisable, the quality of life is impacted. No-one can park, because there are so many vehicles there now, and no-one can get through. It becomes more dangerous for children. This fundamentally changes the quality of life in our neighbourhoods and our streets.

I am very cautious and have had the planning portfolio in opposition on a number of occasions and have been very active in ensuring that we get better outcomes. In government I worked with Matthew Guy to get neighbourhood residential zones implemented. The NRZs were a very significant innovation in protecting our suburbs, and as I have said in this chamber in previous times when I had shadow planning in the last Parliament, the removal by Mr Wynne, the Minister for Planning, of the

neighbourhood residential zones, the emasculating of them with the VC110 planning amendment, removed the two-dwelling cap.

I will never forget the hearing at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I had written the question for our people. They asked the question about a large block in Elsternwick, a 1000-square-metre block, and VC110 had ripped away the protections. They said to Mr Wynne, ‘How many buildings or dwellings can go on that block? Is it two? Is it four? Is it six? Is it eight? Is it 10, or more?’. He said, ‘It’s 10 or more’. So make no mistake, this government is committed to densification, intensification. It is committed to the destruction of Melbourne as we know it. It wants to fundamentally change the city. It wants high-rise, tall towers, dense structures, all across the eastern suburbs and the north and the west of Melbourne, and it wants to destroy the ambience and the quality of life. It hates people who have got a decent home on a decent suburban block with decent canopy trees, decent opportunities to grow a vegetable patch and a backyard—somewhere for the kids to kick a footy. That is what Daniel Andrews and his planning minister, Richard Wynne, hate, and they want to destroy it.

This government and the previous Labor government, going back to 2000 and *Melbourne 2030*, has been committed to the slow, steady erosion of a suburban quality way of life. They have a different view. They see it as a more cosmopolitan view. We will all live in towers. We will all live with dense things. Yes, there will be a park down the end of the street, perhaps, but that is not necessarily so. The fact that there are four times as many people in the suburbs, the fact that the trams are crowded—they are not now because of COVID, but if you go back to the load figures last financial year on the trains and the trams, the load factors were extraordinary and the growth of public transport usage was huge. That was fundamentally a result of huge population growth and the densification and the need of people to use alternatives to cars. I am not opposed to having a stronger public transport system—in fact I strongly support that—but it should be done for the right reasons.

I note particularly the difficulty of the Environment and Planning Committee to do the work that is required here. I think it is a significant challenge for the Environment and Planning Committee to do this work. It is a very, very large reference. We are opposed to excessive ministerial call-ins. We want to protect third-party appeal rights. We agree with many of the concerns about VCAT, and I do not let councils off the hook here, because some councils play a game with VCAT. They do not make hard decisions, they just let the thing flow through to VCAT and they seek to blame big bad VCAT. I think big bad VCAT is sometimes bad, but sometimes it is true that councils have not done the work ahead of time to make the decisions and plan their communities properly. I would add to this list and say an active council planning framework ahead of time with clear signals about what can be done and what cannot be done where and how. I think that we have not done enough of that, Mr Hayes, and I would say to the committee to look at how councils can constructively make those decisions.

On the heritage matter, Mr Smith, the new Shadow Minister for Planning and Heritage, has been very active protecting heritage, and I strongly support him in that. We will be working hard to see that our heritage is protected. Our institutional and building heritage is something that we should treasure. It adds to the quality of life, it adds to the sense of place, it adds to the connection that we have and it adds to the history that we all feel is part of Melbourne and our suburbs. It is not an accident that local history groups are so significant. It is not an accident that people have that strong connection to place. I think our heritage protections are really critical to that.

I do want to say something about costs very quickly and then I will stop. We actually need to pay heed to costs, and that is excessive regulation. Part of that is about clarity of the process ahead of time to make sure that people know where they are heading. Mr Hayes, we support this motion and I look forward to working with you on it.

**Ms TERPSTRA** (Eastern Metropolitan) (16:42): I rise to make a contribution in support of this motion moved by Mr Hayes that the house require the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into, consider and report by June 2022 on the adequacy of the Planning and Environment

Act 1987 and the Victorian planning framework in relation to planning and heritage protection. Now, there is quite a lot in this motion—I will just touch on the broad themes—relating to the cost of housing, environmental sustainability and vegetation protection, delivering certainty and fairness on planning decisions for communities, protecting heritage in Victoria, ensuring residential zones are delivered and the type of housing that communities want and any other matter the committee considers relevant.

I have had the benefit of listening to the contributions of others, both on the crossbench and on the benches opposite. I was actually going to say before that we are almost on a unity ticket with Mr Davis, but then he started to attack us. We almost got there. What I can say is there is keen interest by all in this chamber to support this motion but also to work together to try and get the best out of Victoria's planning laws and frameworks. Mr Barton is sitting there and he will share these sentiments as a representative of the Eastern Metropolitan Region. My own region is a diverse region and it has its own fair share of heritage landmarks, but also we have green wedges within the region and we also have busy activity centres such as Heidelberg. I might just talk very quickly about a couple of things that I have personal experience of having lived in my region for a long time.

I can recall just a few years ago now a local community group formed called the Banyule Estate Residents Group and that was around trying to protect the Banyule Homestead. For those of you who may not be familiar with that, Banyule Homestead was built in 1846 and is a rare and the only intact example of a pre-gold rush mansion in Victoria. It is incredibly significant.

**Mr Finn:** Where is it?

**Ms TERPSTRA:** In Heidelberg. It was built by architect John Gill for Joseph Hawdon. Banyule Homestead sits on land overlooking the Banyule Swamp in the Banyule Flats Reserve. Just as an aside, I will make comment that it is a significant commitment by the Andrews Labor government to in fact preserve the Banyule Swamp and the wetlands because the North East Link will in fact tunnel under those wetlands. It just goes to show you how significant that area is and how invested the community are in protecting that. As I said, this is the only intact example of a mansion built to that style because John Gill as an architect principally built those mansions in Sydney. It is indeed a rare thing. Sadly it was owned by the Victorian government only to get Jeffed in 1995. It was an annexe to the National Gallery of Victoria. It used to display or have within its walls many works of the Heidelberg School artists, and sadly the property has been in private hands ever since then.

The Banyule Estate Residents Group fought a mighty campaign to protect this property when it was sold a couple of years ago and the new owners wanted to turn it into a wedding venue. Now, I was very concerned at the time that what we would have seen was that the matter would have gone to VCAT and they would have lost. But I was so impressed by the efforts that the community members went to in getting acoustics experts to talk about noise—even the impact of the swamp. There are actually—and this is amazing—bugs in the Banyule Swamp that migratory birds feed on. It is so significant; these birds come once a year to feed on bugs in that swamp. It is incredible once you get into these things—you realise. And it goes to what Dr Ratnam was saying before about our communities—how people live in our communities and the value that these things have in our communities. I think these migratory birds used to come from Japan as well. They would make their way down and just, you know, feed in this swamp.

The whole thing around why this relates to planning is if this was going to be a noisy, well-lit venue it would disturb the birds and it would upset the ecosystem in the swamp, right? So you can see how sometimes planning decisions can have really interesting flow-on effects. But, look, the good news was, just in regard to that campaign, that they won. The rejection of that planning application was upheld in VCAT. Today the homestead is still in private hands, sadly. I personally would like to see that mansion returned to public hands so everyone can enjoy the grounds, and also perhaps we could see the history of the Heidelberg School artists being displayed back within those walls. But it was a near miss.

**Mr Finn:** Come up with the cash, then.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Well, it was a near miss, but it just goes to show you that our community are invested in protecting our heritage. Not as a native Melburnian but as someone that has lived here for some time now, what I can say is that what really strikes you about Melbourne and Victoria is how well, generally speaking, Victorians have protected and the governments have protected our heritage. Because you can travel to other capital cities within Australia and oftentimes you do not see the same level of protection for some of these heritage landmarks.

As I touched on before, we also have green wedges in the Eastern Metropolitan Region. I know I frequently get contacted by people who live in Warrandyte and also in and around Manningham who talk about their concerns with regard to planning applications that are being made within the Manningham local government area.

*Members interjecting.*

**Dr Cumming:** Well, it is a crossbench day.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Well, thank you, Dr Cumming, for that newsflash. In any event what I would like to say is that I appreciate and understand Mr Hayes's concern about this, so I look forward to this matter being referred to the Environment and Planning Committee. It is good to see that already we have a level of commitment and goodwill that is being spoken about in the chamber today, and I look forward to working with all of you and opposition members to explore many of the aspects that are listed in this motion. There is an opportunity to do some really good work here, and I am pleased to see that the government is saying that they are quite interested in looking at this and making more sense of it.

I will just finish on this point, if I may. I think what is being said is right: sometimes planning decisions can appear confusing or it is not clear about why things have been made, and I think that it is important that the community can feel that they have a level of confidence at least in even understanding decisions or have a level of certainty about why things have been done in a certain way. I look forward to working with everybody on it, and as I said, I commend this motion to the house.

**Mr BARTON** (Eastern Metropolitan) (16:50): I will just skip through what everybody has already raised, which were very important points that I wanted to raise before, and I will just concentrate on vulnerable Victorians. As many of us know, homelessness affects a wide range of individuals from various circumstances and backgrounds. Homelessness does not just refer to those sleeping rough on our streets. It includes those living in inadequate and unstable housing. I find it completely outrageous that so many Victorians are struggling or unable to find safe and secure housing on a day-to-day basis these days. As a community we need to work together and find a plausible solution to overcome this. Ultimately the solution comes down to housing and to affordability.

To get individuals and their families into safe and affordable housing we have to address the issues at two levels: additional social housing and increased availability of affordable housing. 'Social housing' refers to accommodation available to Victorians experiencing homelessness, escaping family violence, with a disability or who urgently need to move for health reasons. It also includes Victorians who have very low household income and who are on the brink of homelessness and are unable to afford the rent. The purpose of social housing is to get these individuals and families off the streets and into the safety of their own home.

My time on the homelessness inquiry has taught me that social housing has to be available where the problem exists. It is all well and good to have the majority of social housing in the city, but you cannot expect someone from rural Victoria to uproot their life, their support networks and their children from their normal routine. As a result, many of these families end up sleeping in their cars or at local camping sites. Ensuring that affordable residential zones and social housing are available in areas where the community need them is a must. That being said, it is all clear that Victoria is in desperate

need of affordable housing in areas suited to our local communities. As I mentioned, additional social housing is important and essential, but it is not a permanent and nor is it a long-term solution.

Affordable housing is the long-term solution. It means that those whose income typically does not meet the high market costs of the areas they live and work in are able to live there. It means that those who are now on low to moderate incomes can comfortably afford the rent. It means that the cost of purchasing property is not fanciful or a dream but reasonable and realistic. We now have generations who can no longer afford to purchase their own home when prices are so astronomical that ordinary working people cannot even dream of affording one.

Rent prices have nearly doubled in the last decade. In regional Victoria rent prices have soared from \$185 per week to \$330 and for those in Melbourne from \$260 to in excess of \$400, yet in that same period wage growth fell for low-income households and the pressures of the cost of living have become greater than ever before. If you work in the gig economy or in insecure work, it is clear that you are living from pay cheque to pay cheque. As a community we know that there are people struggling on a day-to-day basis, but in reality do we notice them? Do we actively know who is on the brink of homelessness or on the brink of defaulting on their mortgage or even being able to pay their rent? The fact is many Victorians are one pay cheque away from homelessness. If we are ever going to make a positive change to protect our history, to protect our environment and to protect our most vulnerable members of society, we need to inquire into these topics. Therefore it is no surprise that I will be supporting this motion.

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) (16:54): I rise for the second time today to support a motion moved by a colleague on the crossbench, so it is quite a big day for me. I am quite pleased and very enthusiastic in fact to support the motion moved by Mr Hayes. I commend him for putting this forward, because I think it is a motion that covers a number of areas that do need to be looked at as a matter of urgency, because we are on the precipice here in Victoria at the minute. We are very, very proud of some of our suburbs. We are very, very proud of the planning that has gone into the City of Melbourne over such a long period of time. You just have to go to Melbourne and compare it to Sydney to see where the planning was. When you go to the CBD of Melbourne, it is very, very well-planned—wide streets, trees, the whole thing. It is just a beautiful place, whereas in Sydney you have got, well, goat tracks going in various different directions at any given time. I think that that just emphasises the importance of planning with regard to how we live our lives and how we want to have those things around us.

I have always been of the view that a backyard is a very, very important thing. I have always had a backyard, apart from when I was living in flats for a little while. But as Mr Barton points out, it is quite hard for many to even get a house, much less a backyard. And when you look at the prices now—they are coming down a little bit, I am told—they are pretty horrendous. As somebody who has one daughter in her 20s and another couple coming up at the rear of the field it concerns me as to what is going to happen to them as they wish to go out and perhaps start their own families and maybe even get married, you never know. Stranger things have happened. It does concern me rather that these barriers will be something that will be a huge problem for them. These are issues that we do have to look at.

I think the environmental issues, the green wedge issues, are huge issues. I will give you an example that is going on at the moment out between Sunbury and Bulla. There is a green wedge out there, and right on the edge of the green wedge they are proposing to dump carcinogenic toxic soil. Now, I would have thought if you were going to dump carcinogenic toxic soil somewhere, you would not dump it next to a green wedge, nor would you dump it next to tributaries which flow straight into the Maribyrnong River. It is quite ludicrous in my view and I cannot work out what the hell is going on there, to tell you the truth. I am going to be speaking about it in a minute in fact during statements on reports, papers and petitions, but I just thought I would mention it now because I think the planning controls in this regard are just totally confusing. In one area you cannot build a house, but across the road you can dump thousands of tonnes of carcinogenic toxic soil. If you can tell me the logic there, please do, because I cannot see it. I just cannot see it. It is very, very odd. The matter at the moment is

before the planning minister, and I am very hopeful that he will do the right thing by the people of Sunbury and Bulla and knock this whole deal on the head.

Having said that, I know there are a number of speakers who wish to have their say so I will leave it there, but I do commend Mr Hayes and I look forward to the committee examining the issues that this motion raises and, more importantly, I look forward to the committee finding solutions.

**Dr CUMMING** (Western Metropolitan) (16:58): I rise today to support Mr Hayes's motion. The reason why I am rising today to support Mr Hayes's motion is I know that Mr Hayes is very passionate about the heritage of Brighton, but there are wonderful heritage aspects in Western Metro, many, many beautiful heritage buildings in Footscray, because obviously Footscray and other parts of Western Metro have a lot of heritage significance that needs to be looked after and preserved for our future generations.

**A member** interjected.

**Dr CUMMING:** Especially pubs, and I totally agree. There is many a pub in Western Metro that we need to make sure is not demolished by a developer.

I have spoken many times about social housing and my passion for social housing in Braybrook and Maidstone. I am hoping that in this committee we will be looking at social housing, especially in Maidstone and Braybrook, seeing as this government has not made any special announcements to the same magnitude of the nine areas that they have highlighted within this 59th Parliament. Hopefully this government looks at the quality of the public housing in Braybrook and Maidstone and actually gets it to a standard of now, 2020. It would be absolutely fantastic if this committee could possibly look at that, because obviously the high cost of housing is going to continue. During these pandemic times obviously there have been a lot of people struggling to pay their mortgages. As well there will be many stretches on the market given that there are a lot of Victorians who are thinking of relocating to Queensland.

One of my ex-councillors, Cr Janis Rossiter, who now is living in Queensland, just called me over the weekend for my birthday and explained that in Queensland there are a lot of Melburnians who are buying properties in Queensland sight unseen. So there is going to be obviously a flood on the market in the future, and obviously there are concerns for many at the moment. You have all those small business people, especially in my area of Western Metro, that have lost their business due to their closures in the very, very long lockdown that we have had here in Victoria.

So I am looking forward to Mr Hayes's report coming back to this Parliament in June 2022, which will just be a couple of months shy of the next state election. Hopefully in 2022 the government has got contact tracing under control and we can actually look after ourselves in a COVID-norm way, making sure that we continue to understand that this is a virus and that we are going to have to continue to wash our hands. Hopefully all businesses will have their COVID-safe plans and be able to continue paying the mortgages off their homes and off their commercial properties and the like.

I am also hopeful—it was Mr Barton who did the homelessness inquiry, which the whole crossbench supported—with the homelessness inquiry that this crossbench has led that we and this government look at the importance of having more social housing, not just in one place but spread across the whole of Victoria, because that is where it is needed. It would seem from other contributions that I have heard in the last couple of weeks around the difficulties in country Victoria and obviously the bushfires that we have just recently had, the importance of housing and social housing throughout regional Victoria will be something that in the future either the homelessness inquiry or this crossbench inquiry will look at and this government will hopefully take on board. Seeing that this report will be coming in June 2022, maybe the next government will pick these inquiries up and the recommendations and go forward to make sure that there is enough social housing and good-quality social housing not only in my region of Western Metro but also in Western Victoria. I thank and support Mr Hayes today.



**Dr BACH** (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:04): It is also a great pleasure for me to rise in support of Mr Hayes's motion. It is a wideranging motion, and I am really pleased to support it today for a whole range of reasons that I will just touch on briefly given the hour. It has been interesting to hear other members speak about some of the reasons why they think Mr Hayes's motion is really important.

As I have discussed on numerous occasions already in his place, I receive so much correspondence from constituents in my electorate, the Eastern Metropolitan Region, about a number of the issues that Mr Hayes seeks to highlight in his motion. We just heard Dr Cumming talk about the provision of social housing. It was a pleasure, despite the really distressing information I have heard, to sit on a committee recently where we thought deeply about homelessness and the total lack of social housing over many, many years dating back to 2006. I have had conversations with my friend Ms Lovell, the former housing minister, about this. It was my great pleasure to work really closely alongside her in her quest to increase the provision of social housing in Victoria when she was the minister. I look forward, hoping as I do that this motion passes, to the committee being able to provide some really strong recommendations regarding the provision of social housing.

I know that population policy is a particular passion for Mr Hayes. It may not be that I agree with him on every point when it comes to population policy, but I also think it is really important, especially at this point in time, to look at population policy. We do know that many Victorians are thinking about leaving Victoria. Of course what has happened at this time may well have an impact on the number of people who are wanting to come to Victoria. I was pleased that the coalition took a really strong policy regarding decentralisation to the last election. In particular I was pleased that there were strong policies regarding the provision of fast trains that would run services to Ballarat, Wodonga, Shepparton and Geelong as major regional centres. My hope is that the committee, should Mr Hayes's motion pass as I hope it does, will look closely into some of these things that have been policy interests of mine for some time.

To think about how environmental sustainability should function when thinking about the Planning and Environment Act 1987 is really important. I recently had the pleasure of meeting with an outstanding environmental activist in my electorate, Julie Fechner, and her dingo Muddi to talk about how it is that we agreed that especially as we seek to kickstart our economy, which is on life support right now here in Victoria, we both felt strongly that we need more sustainability initiatives in Eltham but also right across the Eastern Metropolitan Region. Mr Hayes's motion talks about the green wedges, and again I think we must guard our green wedges so jealously. It was Rupert Hamer who said that the green wedges are the lungs of the city, and so again I am really pleased to see that Mr Hayes wants to make sure that protecting green wedges is a feature of this inquiry.

I, like Mr Hayes, have deep reservations about the adequacy of the current criteria and processes for heritage protection. I was talking to one of my constituents just the other day about this specific matter. I received an email from another constituent in Mount Waverley, again about this specific matter, just very recently. She talked with me about overdevelopment and local amenity and argued that, if some proposed changes went ahead in her neighbourhood, the particular development would irretrievably alter the neighbourhood's look and feel. That was the language that she used, and it is interesting because she specifically referred to the role of the council. I am looking now at Mr Hayes's motion, point (4)(f). I think it is right for Mr Hayes to insert that point regarding heritage protection specifically into his motion.

Like I said, it is a wideranging motion, and we could talk about it all day long I am sure, but time is of the essence so I will finish my contribution there. Mr Hayes's motion goes to the heart of so much of the material that comes to me in my role as a representative for the Eastern Metropolitan Region. For that reason I am pleased to be able to support it today.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Business of the house****NOTICES OF MOTION AND ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) (17:09): I move:

That the consideration of the remaining notices of motion and orders of the day, general business, be postponed until the next day of meeting.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Statements on reports, papers and petitions****WEST GATE TUNNEL***Petition*

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) (17:10): I rise to speak on the petition that I presented last sitting week opposing the dumping of toxic soil in Sunbury Road between Sunbury and Bulla at the Hi-Quality premises. My very, very great concern about this proposal is very clear, and I have made it very clear on a number of occasions. It involves the health of thousands and thousands of people. Sunbury is about to explode in terms of its population. Sunbury is about to probably double in size over the next decade or so. It seems to me that it is ludicrous that in an area where young families are moving in and where young couples are moving in to start their lives together, to build their homes and to start their families, up the road you would have a toxic waste or toxic soil dump. It is just extraordinary. I mean, this stuff is carcinogenic. For those who do not understand what that means: it causes cancer. It is dangerous. This stuff should not be near people. But the government is proposing that it be dumped just 200 metres from a new residential estate—just up the road from the Goonawarra estate, just around the corner—

*Members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman)**: Order! Down the back there—could we keep it a bit quiet. It is rare that I have trouble hearing Mr Finn, but I am struggling a bit.

**Mr FINN**: I looked over there and I saw who was there, and I can understand why you were having trouble hearing me. What I am saying is that it is a real concern when this sort of material is being dumped near residential housing, and it is something that concerns me enormously for future generations. It might not come up in this generation, but it will most surely come up in the next. The prospect of kids with cancer in Sunbury and Bulla leaves me just appalled—just horrified at the prospect.

Of course this new proposal that we are discussing will also involve up to 1000 new trucks. Now, I do not know if it will be every day or every week—I am hearing different figures—but certainly it will be a significant number of new trucks, and we have already got more than enough trucks on Sunbury Road. I am not sure how many members are aware of the Bulla bridge, but that bridge is about 150 years old. It was not designed and it was not built to carry B-doubles and all of these sorts of huge trucks laden with soil. It just was not meant for that. Of course the Bulla bypass is a long way away from what we are hearing—again, on the desk of the Minister for Planning; there cannot be a whole lot of room there at the minute. I am just horrified at the prospect of what will happen if this plan goes ahead.

One question that I am constantly being asked by people in Sunbury is: ‘Where’s Josh Bull in all of this?’. And I have to say, ‘I don’t know’. Here he is, the member for Sunbury, who got re-elected with a massive majority at the last election, and he has disappeared. We have hardly seen him since. Here we have a major threat to his constituents—to tens of thousands of his constituents—a major health threat to future generations, and Josh Bull is nowhere to be found. He is nowhere to be found. I challenge Josh Bull, and indeed I challenge members in this chamber—all members in this chamber from the west—to join together to fight this thing. I have done it before. I did not get anywhere. I will