

Thursday, 30 July 2026

The Speaker took the Chair at 2 p.m.

Start of Sitting Day

KARAKIA/PRAYERS

MAUREEN PUGH (Assistant Speaker) (14:00): Almighty God, we give thanks for the blessings which have been bestowed on us. Laying aside all personal interests, we acknowledge the King and pray for guidance in our deliberations that we may conduct the affairs of this House with wisdom, justice, mercy, and humility for the welfare and the peace of New Zealand. Amen.

Speaker's Rulings

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE—RESPONSE TO INTERJECTIONS

SPEAKER: Members, I've noticed concerns expressed by some around the comments in yesterday's general debate by the Rt Hon Winston Peters. I appreciate the concerns about the rebuttal comments offered by Mr Peters. With the benefit of hindsight, I could see that they were inappropriate. What's not understood by many who are observers of Parliament is that the person who has the floor has an open mic. Therefore, everything they say is audible. What's not audible are some of the interjections that are said in the House. In the case of yesterday's speech, there was interjection from Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan that led to the response from the Rt Hon Winston Peters. That is not to excuse unparliamentary language, but the Speaker at the time needs to decide if the whole House should be interrupted when it's, effectively, two members who have traded comments—some of which may be offensive.

I note that no member of the House yesterday, including Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan, took a point of order calling my attention particularly to this matter. I refer the House to Speaker's ruling 49/2. In the absence of any point of order on that matter, my judgment was that it was a tit-for-tat situation and that the House should not be interrupted. I refer members also to Speaker's ruling 49/4, which I affirm today. Please do not think that that means that I approve comments like this. I'd like to have a higher quality of debate in this House, but in the end, the quality of the debate is entirely up to the members who are here participating in Parliament's processes. For broader clarification, I refer members to Speakers' rulings 47/1, 47/2, and 47/3. While they are broad of the matter discussed today, although related, I affirm those Speakers' rulings also.

Hon Dr DUNCAN WEBB (Labour—Christchurch Central) (14:03): Point of order, Mr Speaker. Thank you, Mr Speaker. You have previously, on 19 February, pointed out a similar ruling, and in that ruling, you made it very clear that it was "highly disorderly" to make comments like that—and they're your words. On other occasions, you have required the offending member to take steps at a subsequent session—I think the word "spineless" was used on one occasion, and you required an apology the next sitting day. I'm wondering whether, given the nature of those and your very strong language condemning similar comments previously, that's an appropriate course of conduct.

SPEAKER: I've thought very long and hard about that, and I've, as I say, considered all that has been said, but in the end, when you get quite a considerable amount of interjection during a member's speech, there will always be a point of bite-back. Now, particularly I've referenced those Speakers' rulings—I think it's—47/1, 47/2, and 47/3. While they are broadly related, they're not exactly related because, there is nothing in the content that was actually said in the words that would lead us to any conclusion around those matters. While this is something that some members might desire, it would have been appropriate for that to have been raised at the time. My reflection in those other matters was post there having been an objection raised in the House at the time.

Business of the House

BUSINESS STATEMENT

Hon SCOTT SIMPSON (Deputy Leader of the House) (14:04): Next week, the House will consider the second readings of the Natural Environment Bill and the Planning Bill. It will also

consider the remaining stages of the Te Here ā Nuku (Nelson Tenth) Bill. Wednesday will be a members' day and be extended into Thursday morning for Government business.

Presentation

PETITIONS

SPEAKER: A petition has been delivered to the Clerk for presentation.

CLERK (14:05): Petition of Paul Todd requesting that the House urge the Government to take urgent action to better protect emergency front-line workers from assault and abuse.

SPEAKER: That petition stands referred to the Petitions Committee. No papers have been delivered.

Presentation

SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

SPEAKER: Five select committee reports have been delivered for presentation.

CLERK (14:05):

- Reports of the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the:
 - 2026-27 Estimates for Vote Finance (excluding infrastructure appropriations), Fiscal Strategy Report 2026, and Budget Economic and Fiscal Update 2026
 - review briefing on the 2024-25 annual review of the Office of the Controller and Auditor-General
- report of the Health Committee on the petition of Meg Vardy
- report of the Justice Committee on the Climate Change Response (Tort Liability) Amendment Bill
- report of the Māori Affairs Committee on the briefing on Te Mātāwai.

SPEAKER: The bill is set down for second reading, and the briefings and review briefing are set down for consideration. No bills have been introduced.

Oral Questions to Ministers

HOUSING

Question No. 1

TAMATHA PAUL (Green—Wellington Central) (14:06) to the **Minister of Housing:** Is he concerned by the Salvation Army's findings that more people are becoming homeless for the first time alongside an entrenched pattern of repeat homelessness; and if so, what will he do to address this?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Minister of Housing) (14:06): The short answer is yes. I think that anyone in the House, or any New Zealander, would be concerned about homelessness in this country, which is a systemic issue that's been getting worse for around the last decade. From 2018 to 2023, for example, severe housing deprivation increased by 13 percent, the number of people in temporary accommodation increased by over 70 percent, and the number of people sleeping rough increased by 37 percent. We need to make sure that our response to this is based on high-quality data and evidence. The finding that the member refers to is, I'm advised, based on a teams' table talk discussion and a one-on-one kōrero with a selection of managers of service providers, and, although useful, it is not a substitute for statistical data. In relation to the second part of the question, we are addressing housing need and homelessness from every angle, fixing our planning system and infrastructure system, delivering new social homes—over 8,000 since November 2023—funding additional social and affordable housing places—over 5,000 over the

life of this Government, so far—providing additional Housing First places and additional support for rough sleepers, and completely reorienting the housing investment system so that we build the right houses in the right places for the right people.

Tamatha Paul: Does he accept that 18 of 19 front-line providers told the Salvation Army that homelessness has increased over the last six months?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: That is what the report says—yes.

Tamatha Paul: How does he defend the Government reducing funding for homelessness responses by \$75 million over the last two years, while front-line organisations report that homelessness continues to rise?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: I would reject the member's figures there. Actually, the Government has put a considerable amount into a variety of programmes, including Housing First, which I've referenced in the primary answer, which is starting to pay real dividends and have real results. We've also, in relation to what I've already said, invested considerably in a range of different providers, across the social housing spectrum, that work.

Tamatha Paul: So why are there over 300 fewer transitional housing places than when he took office, despite transitional housing operators operating at over 90 percent capacity?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: I'm not 100 percent sure that the member's figures are correct in terms of transitional housing. Transitional housing continues to be a useful mechanism for helping people who are in housing vulnerability. I think it would also be fair to say, though, that it is not something that we'd want to see long term, in the same way that we don't want to see emergency housing used as a long-term programme in order to house people who need support. Ultimately, what we're about is making sure that people can get into social and affordable homes. With transitional housing, the clue is in the name: it's meant to be transitional. It is there, we will fund it, we will make sure that the places that are available are utilised as much as possible, and we will fund the wraparound support that is often required for people in transitional housing, but we shouldn't pretend that it is a panacea for our homelessness challenge—it is not. It is actually, in many cases, a symptom of the underlying system problem.

Tamatha Paul: How does reducing the number of new social housing units, then, from an average of 3,500 a year over the last three years to just a quarter as many over the following three years, help to address rising homelessness?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: I'm really proud of the fact that for the first time, probably, in 20 years, we have a funded four-year-and-beyond pipeline of social housing places. One of the things the sector often says is that rather than big oscillations in funding, what they would actually like to see is a steady pipeline so that they can plan for the future. We have delivered that with additional funding in Budget 2024 and 2025 and Budget 2026, and we've come in behind the Community Housing Funding Agency and, essentially, put a liquidity facility in place so that they can lower the borrowing costs of community housing providers. I'm advised by officials that that is making sure that we can deliver even more houses with the same amount of money because of the ballast the Crown has put behind that agency. So we now have a four-year funded pipeline, and crucially, we're also investing in the right sort of houses—for example, many more 1- and 2-bedroom houses, 50 percent of people on the housing register need a 1- or 2-bedroom house; that wasn't what we were building, it is now what we are building—and crucially, also building in the right places. For example, we know that there's housing deprivation in the Far North, we know that there's housing deprivation in Tairāwhiti; that is where the new housing investment system is prioritising because that's where the housing need is—as opposed to the free-for-all of the past.

Tamatha Paul: Is he concerned by reports from service providers that leaving correction facilities, hospitals, mental health services or other care increases the risk of immediate homelessness; and if so, will he consider a duty to assist on Government agencies to prevent people leaving their care and immediately becoming homeless?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: Yes, I'm very concerned about it. I think it's a disgrace the way we treat people leaving mental health facilities in this country, and the way in which we treat people leaving prison. The most expensive form of housing the Government provides is people in acute mental

health need and in prison. Every person we can keep from bouncing back into an acute mental health facility or bouncing back into prison will save the Government a truckload of money, let alone the amplification of human—

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Move on orders—throw them in jail!

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: —this is a serious issue—

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: This is serious.

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: —this is a serious issue—*[Interruption]*

SPEAKER: Yeah, it is—*[Interruption]* Woah, hang on! Just let the Minister answer. Interruptions or interjections should be rare and reasonable.

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: It's a serious issue from a serious member who deserves a serious answer. The amplification of human potential, if we get this right, is something that worries me—or the lack of amplification of human potential. We have work to do on that. There is no doubt about that. I am deeply troubled by the of number of prisoners who leave prison without a fixed abode, who don't have a house to go to. I'm deeply troubled by reports that I've heard firsthand from providers in the acute mental health space. That is exactly why we are changing this system. I don't pretend for a moment that we've got that right, but we need to fix it. Because everyone who leaves a mental health facility or leaves prison, deserves to go into a warm, dry home. And we are going to fix the system so that happens.

PRIME MINISTER

Question No. 2

Hon CARMEL SEPULONI (Deputy Leader—Labour) (14:13) to the **Prime Minister:** Does he stand by all his Government's statements and actions?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR (Deputy Prime Minister) (14:13) on behalf of the **Prime Minister:** Yes, I mean, how could you not, really. We've seen a new Arms Act, after 43 years of degradation, passed last night; the Holidays Act, something that people had struggled with for a decade, replaced by the Employment Leave Act, also just passed last night; we've just set a 10-year record for term 2 school attendance; the Resource Management Act, the biggest handbrake on this country, is being taken off and replaced by a law based on property rights. This week, we've also seen the infrastructure funding and financing legislation passed, so when people build under that new resource management law, they'll be able to fund the pipes and the roads and the pumping the stations.

Hon Shane Jones: More! More!

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: We're kicking goals—oh and there was also the first exploration consent for oil and gas after the disastrous decision to try and scare that industry out of the country. We're just kicking goals with both feet here. We're very proud to stand by all of our statements and actions.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Does he consider the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade's characterisation of China and 1.4 billion Chinese people as liars, to be consistent with the *Cabinet Manual's* standards of ministerial conduct?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: I don't believe he's made that characterisation as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and therefore, he's not answerable to it.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Does he accept that telling a fellow member of Parliament to “go back to your own country” is racist?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: On behalf of the Prime Minister, I'm responsible for the conduct of my Ministers. However, those comments were made by a party leader in a general debate, and it is true that some members of this House are both a party leader and a Minister. It's a position

that I have some sympathy for, but probably not one that that member's going to have to worry about again.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: What consequences, if any, will the Minister of Foreign Affairs face for his characterisation of China and 1.4 billion Chinese people as “liars”?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: Well, I agree with one thing the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said recently: that our Parliament is sovereign and that we have free speech within this Parliament. That may not be the case in China, but it's certainly the case here. That member can use her free speech in this Parliament to mischaracterise what another member has said, but the consequence that she will face will be on November 7.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Does he consider that a Prime Minister who promised he would travel commercially and has since made 16 international trips on air force aircraft has kept his word?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: You see, the thing is that the Government has a defence force and the defence force has aircraft. If you have aircraft, then you need to practise flying—

SPEAKER: Hang on. Sorry to interrupt the acting Prime Minister. Only one person needs to answer from the Government, not 40-odd.

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: Yeah, don't worry, guys—I've got this. You see, if the defence force is going to have aircraft, they need to fly them; they need to practise flying them and maintaining them. If they're going to be doing that, then they might sometimes also be able to get synergy by transporting the Prime Minister of the country. Now, of course, if you believe that the defence force shouldn't have aircraft, that's another story. If you think that the defence force should have aircraft but they should never leave the ground, that's another story. But if you think that the Government should have aircraft and they should fly, then maybe they could sometimes transport the Prime Minister of the country, as well, and that would be a win-win.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Does he stand by his office's statement that his defence force flights impose no additional cost on the taxpayer; if so, is he telling New Zealanders that those aircraft would have flown those same routes, on those same dates, carrying no passengers, had he not been on board?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: On behalf of the Prime Minister; I do stand by his statement. Let me just lean a little bit on physics. You see, the cost of an airplane flying through the air doesn't really depend on the route, because the air, the atmosphere, it's kind of the same wherever you fly. So, you know, there's—

Hon Chris Bishop: What!

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: Yeah, no, believe me—I'm an engineer. And so, there's really no difference in cost if it flies on one route or another. It just sort of glides through the air wherever it goes.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Was it worth spending over \$12,000 of taxpayers' money to save him about 45 minutes driving from Auckland to Hamilton in his Crown limo?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: Well, yes, because the money wasn't actually spent; it would have been spent anyhow. What I think we're getting here is a certain tinge of envy. I think that member would have thought it was fine if it was her. Now she's getting down in the weeds, because whenever her party releases a policy, they go down in the polls.

Hon Simeon Brown: Has the Prime Minister seen any reports of previous Prime Ministers using defence force flights to fly to, say, Christchurch for long lunches?

SPEAKER: Oh, that's—

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: On behalf of the Prime Minister—

SPEAKER: No, hang on. Look, he has no responsibility for what previous Prime Ministers may or may not have done.

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: I've seen reports.

SPEAKER: He's seen reports, yes, but it would have to be a report that is totally specific to the question that was asked.

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: It is, Mr Speaker. I've seen reports that Helen Clark's limo was flying—

SPEAKER: No, sorry, hang on a minute. Just a moment.

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: —to the rugby. It almost took off, but not quite.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Does he accept that a leader who breaks his own promise on air travel, and is too weak to discipline a Minister who tells a Chinese-born New Zealander to go back to his own country, has built a Government of no standards and no accountability?

Hon DAVID SEYMOUR: On behalf of the Prime Minister, what we've seen is an attempted orchestral conductorship, where she's built up the questions and she's tried to really rise to a cacophony, a triumph, and unfortunately, the way question time's gone today, she just hit a bum note.

Hon Carmel Sepuloni: Just answer the question—did he answer the question?

SPEAKER: Given the nature of the question, he most certainly addressed it.

JUSTICE

Question No. 3

CAMERON LUXTON (ACT) (14:20) to the **Associate Minister of Justice:** What recent changes have been made to firearms laws?

Hon NICOLE McKEE (Associate Minister of Justice) (14:20): I am pleased to report that yesterday the Arms Bill passed its third reading in the House. This makes a significant milestone for New Zealanders, particularly licensed firearm owners. For the first time in 43 years, New Zealand will have a modern Arms Act that supports public safety, while ensuring that regulation is proportionate to risk and straightforward for licensed firearm owners to comply with. It's been a long road, and I'm proud to have delivered these much-needed reforms for licensed firearm owners and for New Zealand.

Cameron Luxton: What notable changes will benefit licensed firearm owners?

Hon NICOLE McKEE: Licensed firearm owners will benefit from a wide range of improvements to the Arms Act. The most significant is the removal of sworn police from the new arms regulator, Firearms Safety and Education New Zealand. This will allow police to focus on law enforcement, while enabling the independent regulator to focus on delivering efficient, customer-focused licensing and regulatory services. Licence holders will also benefit from the establishment of an independent Firearms Licensing Review Committee, longer business licence durations, greater flexibility around approved secure storage locations, multi-entry visitor licences, and better regulatory settings for specialist users. These are just some of the many changes that will benefit licensed firearm owners.

Cameron Luxton: What are the next steps for the Arms Bill?

Hon NICOLE McKEE: Next week, the Arms Bill will receive Royal assent and become the Arms Act 2026. While many licensed firearm owners may see this as the end of the reform process, there's actually still important work ahead. The next step is the careful development and implementation of the supporting regulations to ensure that the Act operates as Parliament has intended. While most of the regulations will come into force on 23 September 2026, others will be implemented over the 12 to 18 months following Royal assent. The considered development of these regulations is critical to ensure straightforward compliance for licensed firearm owners.

SPEAKER: Can I just advise all Ministers that answers should be fairly succinct and not at all lengthy.

Cameron Luxton: Minister, how did input from the community shape this bill?

Hon NICOLE McKEE: From the outset, I wanted the community to be involved in the development of the new firearms law. Previous reform in 2019 saw rushed consultation, and by contrast, the Arms Act 2026 has been shaped by an initial public consultation process, a full six-month select committee process, and further targeted consultation on regulations. I just want to take a moment to thank everyone who has been involved in this process, from the community, to the select committee, to Parliament.

TRANSPORT

Question No. 4

PAULO GARCIA (National—New Lynn) (14:24) to the **Minister of Transport:** What progress is being made on public transport?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP (Minister of Transport) (14:24): This morning, I spoke to the Public Transport Association Australia and New Zealand, where I talked about critical public transport in our liveable, vibrant cities. On the weekend, the Government will open our newest railway stations—or Mr Peters, the Minister for Rail, will open the stations at Drury and Paerātā. They will be open to customers on Sunday, putting South Auckland and Franklin's fast-growing communities on the rapid transit map, just in time for the City Rail Link, which is soon to open. The opening of the two stations is also supported by an upgraded local bus network in Paerātā Rise, Ramarama, Drury, Waiuku, Glenbrook, and Pukekohe to connect to Drury and Franklin train stations. This morning, I also reflected that fare subsidies do not really lift patronage over the long term. What we need are reliable services through capital investment.

SPEAKER: That's a nice introduction to a concise answer, it would appear.

Paulo Garcia: What other recent progress has been made on public transport infrastructure?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: Well, last Friday, I turned the sod on the final stage of the Eastern Busway alongside hard-working local MP the Hon Simeon Brown. It's the final stage of a long-running process.

Hon Simeon Brown: Didn't need a regional fuel tax for it.

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: When it fully opens, it will connect Botany, Pakuranga, and Panmure to the city centre. Some said the abolition of the Auckland regional fuel tax would result in the cancellation of the Eastern Busway, but the truth has been the opposite.

Paulo Garcia: How is the Government driving a focus on transit-oriented development around public transport?

Hon CHRIS BISHOP: The Government is committed to enhancing transit-oriented development to align land use, housing, and transport infrastructure. Following the completion of the City Rail Link, Auckland's new Plan Change 120 will result in greater intensification around those key City Rail Link stations and the central business district and of course the rapid transit network. We've reached an equilibrium where density is prioritised around where the infrastructure already is so we can really take advantage of these big, transformational investments in Auckland's future. It's great to see that, I think, the vast majority of people accept that where we build rapid transit and good high-quality public transport, we should also align our housing plans around that.

CHILDREN

Question No. 5

Hon WILLOW-JEAN PRIME (Labour) (14:26) to the **Minister for Children:** Is she confident that no harm is being caused to young people in the military-style academies and youth justice facilities?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR (Minister for Children) (14:27): We know from the latest Safety of Children in Care report that there was a 14 percent decrease in the number of findings of harm in residences—the first time ever there has been a decrease. I am confident that because I made improving safety in residences a priority, we are doing everything we can, and probably more than ever before, to prevent harm in youth justice residences. We introduced standard operating practices, which I was amazed to learn did not exist in residences before. We've also enhanced our recruitment practices, improved and increased the training staff receive, and strengthened leadership at residences. I'm also confident from visiting these facilities and speaking to staff that they are more likely to speak up when they see incidences of harm happening, because they know that action will be taken, and people will be held to account, which they tell me did not always happen before.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Why did two young people voluntarily leave the in-residence component of the latest military-style academy?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: I think I've made it very clear in the past that I won't be speaking about individual members on the military-style academy programme.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Does she stand by introducing military-style academies when the Children's Commissioner stated that the evidence is clear that military-style approaches "frequently cause further harm for mokopuna who have already experienced lives of trauma"?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: Yes, I do stand by introducing the military-style academy pilot. We kept doing the same thing over and over again and expected different results. This Government actually cares about outcomes for young people and cares about giving them opportunities to better themselves.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Is she aware of recent staff-encouraged violence towards a young person at Korowai Manaaki?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: I'm not sure what incident she's referring to.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Can she confirm that, recently, Korowai Manaaki staff got young people to line up in two rows, and then a young person who was leaving the unit was required to walk through two lines and be punched and hit by other young people?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: I'm not going to speak to an incident that may be before the courts or any other issue like that.

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Does she continue to have—quote—"every confidence that those young people are now safe and that it's not happening to them anymore"—unquote—in relation to harm in youth justice facilities?

Hon KAREN CHHOUR: I think it's important to note what I said in the first part of my answer to the first question. We have done a lot of work within youth justice to bring it up to a standard where we can reduce harm to the best that we can. We've made huge improvements with safety in residences; it's one of my key priority areas. We've put a focus on recruiting the best people. No longer do we hire off the Student Job Search website saying, "no experience necessary", and chuck them on the floor. We now have a six-week training induction and a ready-for-work assessment. We've introduced 81 standard operating procedures to ensure clarity and consistency regarding residential operations. We've introduced face-to-face training on 20 critical risk areas, and we've also implemented improved radio telephones to support safe management of residences. We can't prevent all harm, but we can actually make changes to make real change for those young people. That has never been done before.

Rt Hon Winston Peters: Point of order. When that last questioner was asking her question, she had a "quotes unquotes" part of it without any recitation of who the authority was. Now, that's just a waste of everybody's time. Could you ask her next time to follow the rules and tell us who she's quoting?

Hon Willow-Jean Prime: Speaking to the point of order. I was speaking about the Minister's own quote.

Rt Hon Winston Peters: Well, why didn't you say so?

SPEAKER: I think the words "when she said" probably cover that. Do you have another question, Willow-Jean Prime?

HEALTH

Question No. 6

Dr HAMISH CAMPBELL (National—Ilam) (14:31) to the **Minister of Health:** What actions has the Government taken to improve outcomes for New Zealanders living with cancer?

Hon SIMEON BROWN (Minister of Health) (14:31): Every New Zealander knows someone whose life has been impacted by cancer, which is why this Government is taking action across the entire cancer pathway. We've delivered a record \$604 million uplift of Pharmac, funding 66 new medicines, including 33 cancer treatments. We're investing \$210 million to expand cancer treatment services and infusion capacity, \$65 million to improve access to critical diagnostic procedures, and significant funding to upgrade cancer treatment machines. There is further work under way across expanding the age of breast screening to 74; and also lowering the age of bowel screening to align with Australia, with the first steps under way to lower that to 56. Our focus is simple: early detection, faster diagnosis, quicker treatment, and better outcomes for New Zealanders facing cancer.

Dr Hamish Campbell: What recent announcement has the Government made regarding cancer treatment infrastructure?

Hon SIMEON BROWN: Well, just this week, I announced that a new state-of-the-art linear accelerator, or LINAC, is now treating patients at Wellington Regional Hospital. The new machine provides more precise, highly targeted radiation treatment while helping ensure patients can access world-class cancer care closer to home. It is part of our wider programme of investment, which includes new LINACs in Auckland and Dunedin, the first ever of radiation therapy services in Northland and Taranaki, and the new Hawke's Bay Cancer Centre currently under construction. We've also allocated funding in this year's Budget to plan future LINACs in Christchurch, South Auckland, and Nelson. This Government is ensuring patients have access to modern facilities and the latest treatment technology.

Dr Hamish Campbell: How is the Government increasing access to cancer treatment services in New Zealand?

Hon SIMEON BROWN: Cancer treatment is challenging enough without having to spend hours travelling to receive it. That is why the Government is investing to expand cancer treatment services across the country, including 14 new infusion centres and upgrades to 14 existing sites. Just recently, I announced a new community-based cancer infusion service in Henderson, meaning West Aucklanders can receive treatment closer to home instead of travelling into central Auckland. Alongside the new service at Waitakere Hospital, this means more patients can spend less time on the road and more time with the families they love. It's all part of our plan to deliver additional cancer infusion centres so that more New Zealanders can access treatment closer to home.

Dr Hamish Campbell: What steps is the Government taking to improve cancer screening and early detection?

Hon SIMEON BROWN: Early detection saves lives, which is why the Government is investing heavily in cancer screening programmes, expanding breast screening to women aged 70 to 74, ensuring thousands more women can access regular screening and detect cancer earlier. We've also taken the first step to align our bowel screening age with Australia, with Budget '26 funding the lowering of the screening age to 56, helping identify bowel cancer sooner and giving more New Zealanders the best possible chance of successful treatment and recovery. These investments reflect our commitment to improving cancer outcomes by ensuring people can access screening, diagnoses, and treatment as early as possible.

RESOURCES

Question No. 7

ANDY FOSTER (NZ First) (14:34) to the **Minister for Resources**: What announcement has he made regarding oil and gas exploration?

Hon SHANE JONES (Minister for Resources) (14:35): It is a rejoiceful day, in contrast to that bleak occasion when, previously, a unilateral decision was made without any consultation to Winston Peters and the oil and gas ban was announced unilaterally by Megan Woods and the then Prime Minister. A 12-year petroleum permit has been allocated—*[Interruption]* We don't want to hear marinated slop from over there.

SPEAKER: No, no, that's enough—just stick to the answer.

Hon SHANE JONES: A 12-year petroleum permit has been allocated after the ban has been removed, a ban that has had ruinous consequences upon the region of Taranaki. There is a great acclamation today from Taranaki, because fossil fuels are back.

Hon Dr Megan Woods: Why did you email asking to come, then?

SPEAKER: OK, that's—we'll hear the question.

Rt Hon Winston Peters: Point of order—point of order. Point of order.

SPEAKER: Yeah, just a minute—just give me a minute. A point of order is heard in silence.

Rt Hon Winston Peters: Seeing as that member decided to put the matter of chronology of events in question, why didn't she release the document that she gave us months after she'd made the damn decision?

SPEAKER: Well, no, I think there's a fair question there. I think that sort of intervention is not particularly helpful to the order of the House, nor do, frankly, most of us know what it's about. Supplementary question—*[Interruption]*—and no one else speaking other than the questioner, Andy Foster.

Andy Foster: What are the costs faced by households and businesses across New Zealand as a result of the declining supply of oil and, more particularly, gas in New Zealand?

Hon SHANE JONES: Natural gas represents an essential input into the industry of New Zealand. Firms are closing down. Indeed, our last fertiliser company has great difficulty as a consequence of the decline of the gas industry, driven by the unilateral decision, along with the closure of the refinery at Marsden Point, announced by Megan Woods. We cannot eradicate those facts. I am simply announcing that along with the \$200 million fund, where decisions are soon to arrive, we are establishing a new flow and a level of confidence for the oil and gas industry—and a thousand years will pass before ever I send an email to Christopher Finlayson or that woman.

SPEAKER: Well, I certainly hope that in a thousand years' time, we're still not using email.

Andy Foster: What more can he tell us about this announcement?

SPEAKER: Oh, really?

Hon SHANE JONES: Gas is important for industrial heat. It's important that I elaborate today that New Zealanders can have confidence that this Government has not only made a decision allocating an entitlement to boost the amount of gas coming out of Taranaki but we are going to power New Zealand. We are going to ensure that industry has greater confidence and we move on from that bleak time when Megan Woods conned New Zealand First.

SPEAKER: No, that's not—no, you have to withdraw that last comment.

Rt Hon Winston Peters: No, we can prove that.

SPEAKER: It doesn't matter—doesn't matter. You can't make accusations like that during question time in the House.

Hon SHANE JONES: Mr Speaker, would you like me to table the paperwork proving that I'm correct?

SPEAKER: Look, you could table anything you like, but you can withdraw that remark just for now.

Hon SHANE JONES: I shall withdraw that remark.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

EDUCATION

Question No. 8

Hon GINNY ANDERSEN (Labour) (14:39) to the Minister of Education: Does she stand by her statement that “No AI was used in the writing of the curriculum”; if so, why do internal documents from the Ministry of Education on the curriculum process note that “AI tools will be used to check and generate content”?

Hon ERICA STANFORD (Minister of Education) (14:39): Yes, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the development of the Curriculum, and they have advised me that artificial intelligence (AI) was not used to write the Curriculum. I'd encourage the member to read the full briefing she's quoting from, which clearly states that the actual writing will be undertaken by technical writers in the ministry. I'm advised by the ministry that, while they did consider very early on whether or not there was a place for AI to write parts of the Curriculum, ultimately they decided that this task was best suited to writers, and that is what they chose to do.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Why, then, did she say in this House that no AI was used in writing the Curriculum, when it is obvious from looking at the content of the Curriculum that it has been used?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Because it wasn't.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Who is correct: the Minister, who maintains that AI was not used to write the Curriculum, or music teacher Tim Carson, who described the music curriculum as “riddled with errors” and with “all the hallmarks of AI”?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: I agree with one of the writers who wrote, “I was contracted to the Ministry as a subject expert for the Science Curriculum rewrite. My input was through repeated cycles of editing and adjusting detail on a very large spreadsheet. You might want to do a bit more homework Ginny.”—Jon Hickford. That was a comment on one of her Facebook posts. *[Interruption]*

SPEAKER: One person has the floor: Ginny Andersen.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Does she really expect parents to accept her semantics and believe that generating content through AI is somehow different to writing it?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Generating and writing are very different things. What I expect, and know, parents believe is that their young people are doing better at school. I want to quote: “As a father of four, I can say what Labour was doing in taking our kids' education backwards”—

SPEAKER: No, no. That's enough. That's fine. Got another supp'?

Hon Ginny Andersen: I was happy for her to finish.

SPEAKER: Well, your side has complained repeatedly about the Government using their own questions to attack the Opposition. I thought it would be the same when the Opposition asks a question only to find itself attacked by that question.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Does she accept that she is now relying on the same distinction she previously used to defend Learning First's role in the Curriculum that generating or sourcing content is somehow different from writing it, and, if so, where exactly does she draw the line?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Oh, we're back to the conspiracy theory of who wrote the Curriculum: was it the Australians; was it the person who's generating it through AI? For goodness' sake, the fact of the matter is that we have delivered two Curriculum areas that have been in place in schools for 18 months: English and maths. Maths went up 6 percent at year 6, and writing went up 6 percent. We are delivering a Curriculum that is improving the lives of children. That father said, "What National has done so far already, I can see a better result for my kids." What matters here is results. Our kids are doing better. Half of teachers say that their kids are doing better; 75 percent of parents think that their kids are doing better. It's all in the Education Review Office report. In fact, we need to stop worrying about conspiracy theories, and worry about results, because we are delivering.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Point of order, Mr Speaker. *[Interruption]*

SPEAKER: Just a moment. A point of order.

Hon Ginny Andersen: That question was about where the line exists between generating content and writing it; all I got was a diatribe about fake achievements. That did not even address the question.

SPEAKER: I don't think the response was about fake achievement; it was about achievement. Many people would say that might be where the line is drawn between the two—basically, writing and AI—that I think you were suggesting.

Hon Ginny Andersen: Well, is it possible for the Minister to address the point of the question, which was: where is the line between generating and writing content? I think that's an important question for parents.

SPEAKER: I think it is, and I think she answered it by saying it's in the achievement that they're seeing. Do you have another supplementary?

Hon Ginny Andersen: I do have another supplementary. What is the worst part of her Curriculum forms: is it (a) using AI, (b) getting Australia's Learning First to write it, (c) taking out all the Māori words, or (d) all of the above?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: I know why the previous Minister, now member, is trying to cast aspersions: because of the fact that we will have, by the end of this term, rewritten every single Curriculum area up to year 13, and delivered them, which is a huge—a huge—achievement in just three years, because of the 350 teachers we're using to write the secondary curriculum and the hundreds of teachers we're using to help us write the primary curriculum. Now, the reason we're getting all these deflections about "Maybe it was Australia" and "Maybe it was AI" is because, in six long years, they didn't deliver a single Curriculum area. That's why our kids were going backwards, and that's why I give a damn and am going to deliver these results for our kids by the end of this term.

IMMIGRATION

Question No. 9

CARL BATES (National—Whanganui) (14:45) to the **Minister of Immigration:** What recent announcement has she made on the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme?

Hon ERICA STANFORD (Minister of Immigration) (14:45): Well, while I hurriedly look for my notes, in fact, I might have to do it just—oh no, I've got them. Lucky me! This week, I announced a package of changes to modernise the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. The changes address feedback that the scheme has become too complex and, in some areas, unnecessarily burdensome. The changes include a graduated accreditation model that recognises trusted RSE employers, streamlined agreements to recruit, clearer cost recovery rules, and a graduated compliance regime, and more flexibility for workers through variation of

conditions and the ability to access the migrant exploitation protection visa. RSE is a great scheme that benefits growers, workers, and our Pacific partners.

Carl Bates: Why is the scheme important for our Pacific partners?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Well, the RSE scheme is a win-win arrangement with our Pacific partners, with approximately 17,000 workers coming each year—the majority of whom are coming from the Pacific. It provides New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture sectors with the seasonal labour needed to meet the peak demand, while also providing Pacific workers with employment, income, and skills they can take back to their home countries. The scheme supports development in the Pacific labour markets and strengthens New Zealand's relationships with our neighbours.

Carl Bates: How do the changes support our exporters?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Well, these changes support exporters by reducing those unnecessary administration burdens by making the scheme easier to use while keeping important safeguards in place. Horticulture and viticulture exports have grown from around \$2.5 billion in 2007 to nearly \$9 billion today, and the RSE scheme has been critical in meeting that peak demand. Streamlined agreements to recruit, longer accreditation for employers with strong compliance records, clearer cost recovery rules, and targeted compliance will give good employers more certainty and allow resources to be focused where risks are the greatest. Variation of conditions will help employers and workers respond when weather or work conditions change.

Hon David Seymour: Does the Minister consider that these changes address the Government's coalition commitment to the ACT Party to lift the cap on the number of RSEs and increase the flexibility of the scheme?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: That is absolutely true. We have made a number of changes not only in this announcement but back in 2024 as well to make sure that the scheme is more flexible for workers and also for employers. While we haven't lifted the cap in this round of changes, the Government felt that it wasn't necessary, given that we were still about 3,000 workers short of that cap, but what we have done to the sector is I have made a personal commitment that we will always look at increasing the cap, where we need to, to support the sector.

Carl Bates: What feedback has she seen on this announcement?

Hon ERICA STANFORD: Well, the feedback I've received is that these changes are being welcomed as a win for growers and workers. When I was making the announcement at the horticulture conference this week, the feedback was very positive. For example, Horticulture New Zealand chief executive Kate Scott said, "The Government's decision to modernise the RSE scheme is a positive and practical step that will benefit growers, workers and Pacific communities ... These practical improvements [will] provide employers with greater clarity while strengthening worker protections,".

AGRICULTURE

Question No. 10

STEVE ABEL (Green) (14:48) to the **Minister of Agriculture:** What actions has the Government taken to support the efforts of Hawke's Bay growers to acquire the McCain vegetable processing facility?

Hon TODD McCLAY (Minister of Agriculture) (14:49): The Government has been working closely with Hawke's Bay mayors and growers since 27 March when McCain announced the commercial decision to close their plant. This has included visits to the region and meetings in Hawke's Bay and Wellington with affected parties. We've also instructed Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) officials who work closely with a group of growers to investigate a grower-led purchase of the site and processing capability on a commercially viable basis. On 29 May, I announced a Government contribution of \$50,000 for the first stage of a feasibility study to assess what was required for a grower-led purchase of the site to be commercially viable. I'm informed that, following this, a consortium of growers made an offer to purchase the McCain site. However,

following a refusal or inability to include the plant machinery in the sale, this offer has been withdrawn. Whilst this has been a commercial decision, I have asked MPI to continue to engage with local growers and the council on next steps.

Steve Abel: How was his Government able to find \$60 million to bail out a cement factory but not the mere \$200,000 that was sought—as opposed to only \$50,000—to support scoping the viability of the McCain vegetable processing facility as a growers-owned cooperative?

Hon TODD McCLAY: These are two very different issues. One is a cost upon a business in New Zealand as a result of climate change obligations. The second, though, is about a commercial decision for a plant that the owner's had, to the best of their ability, decided was not viable. We have supported growers upon the ground. We've been active with them and working very closely with them. It was an initial contribution of funding to start the work on a feasibility study, but I say again: following that, this grower-led group made an offer on the plant, the conditions of which were, unfortunately, not able to be met, and therefore they've withdrawn that and the sale is not able to go ahead.

Steve Abel: Is he concerned that the reason the growers withdrew their offer was because it is apparent that McCain seems to have asset-stripped the facility by selling the machinery—that might be anti-competitive behaviour—to stop it being sold as a viable processing facility?

Hon TODD McCLAY: Well, I'd encourage the member to go and say that outside of this House, without protection, to the media, because I'm not sure what he said is correct, and therefore I would actually caution him not to do that, because I think he would find himself in a lot of trouble. In effect, the owner of that facility decided it was not viable. They made decisions over the plant for themselves. An offer was made to purchase in good faith. Unfortunately, some of the conditions, I understand, around that offer were not able to be met, and therefore the offer was withdrawn.

Steve Abel: What actions is he taking to address the chain of people affected by the closure who have expressed devastation and grief, including growers, workers, contractors, truckers, seed suppliers, and harvest crews?

Hon TODD McCLAY: The horticulture sector this year will be responsible for around \$7 billion worth of exports; Hawke's Bay is a very important part of that, across the board. They produce significantly, not only for the New Zealand market but also for exports. Of course, it is a very challenging time for those who are directly affected, but in as far as the growers are concerned, there will be a number of opportunities, should they choose, around land-use change. There are many other things that are grown there in Hawke's Bay. It is the reason I've asked the Ministry for Primary Industries to continue to engage with local growers and the council on what next steps may be needed.

Steve Abel: Is he content with the loss of the production of the world's finest peas in Hawke's Bay and the fact that frozen peas at the supermarket will now not be New Zealand grown but imported?

Hon TODD McCLAY: I'm sure that many of the products that come from Hawke's Bay are "world's best". In fact, the people there that grow can be very proud of their contribution to New Zealand. However, the owners of that plant made a decision for themselves that it was not commercially viable. We supported growers to see what would be possible for them to make a purchase. They have decided against that. However, I would also say that, equally, we are a trading nation; we produce enough food to feed 40 million people around the world. This year, New Zealand's exports from the primary sector will hit \$64 billion for the first time. The thing about trade is that we get to sell more than we import, but we are also a country that, through trade agreements, must import.

Steve Abel: Does he recognise that New Zealanders do not want us as a country to lose our ability to feed ourselves with our own locally grown produce, and, if so, can he explain to New Zealanders what his Government is going to do to ensure we retain domestic food production capability and resilience?

Hon TODD McCLAY: Well, yes, I do, but, again, we produce enough food to feed 40 million people around the world. I don't think we will run out of food in New Zealand. One of the things we're doing, as a Government, is we're focusing on how we can get the cost of energy down with the reintroduction of oil and gas exploration and liquefied natural gas importation—something that his party doesn't support. We are replacing the Resource Management Act to get costs down and to make it easier for growers to produce high-quality food—something that his party has voted against. In trade, we did a free-trade agreement with India that will open up opportunities for those same growers to export—his party voted against that. We have announced—

Steve Abel: What are you going to do?

Hon TODD McCLAY: These are all things that we are doing, by the way. They're also things that that member is voting against. These things will support the primary sector. I'll tell you the one thing that, actually, when I've been to Hawke's Bay, they've told me we should not be doing: we shouldn't ban nitrogen fertiliser, and we shouldn't add a wealth tax on top of a capital gains tax on top of a climate change tax. That would harm our farmers; it wouldn't help them.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Question No. 11

SHANAN HALBERT (Labour) (14:55) to the **Minister for Tertiary Education:** Does she stand by her statement that "This Government wants all New Zealanders to realise their potential and contribute to our country's success"; if so, how will increased cost of living pressures help students realise their potential?

Hon CHRIS PENK (Acting Minister for Tertiary Education) (14:55): To the first part of the question, yes, I stand by my statement in expressing a desire on behalf of the Government that all New Zealanders be able to realise their full potential and contribute to New Zealand. In terms of the second part of the question, it's true that, in the last six years, cost of living pressures have challenged many New Zealanders, including students. Two of the major costs that typically face students are accommodation and food. I note that recent rent inflation figures are the lowest in 25 years; and in terms of food inflation, the most recent data indicates an increase of 2.8 percent, which one can favourably compare with a rate of inflation of 12.5 percent of a few years ago.

Shanan Halbert: Does she accept that 434,000 applications for 53,000 positions on Student Job Search shows that there are not enough opportunities for students to find employment under this Government?

Hon CHRIS PENK: I'm aware of the statistics in terms of job opportunities and challenges for all New Zealanders, including, again, students. I would point out that this Government has been focused on creating job opportunities by making it easier for businesses to be productive and profitable, for example, by sensible level of regulation and removing red and green tape where possible. I also note specific job creation moves initiated by this Government, for example, in construction, where significant Fast-track Approvals Act consents have been one measure that this Government has undertaken that will ultimately provide a more fertile ground for employment opportunities for students.

Shanan Halbert: How can tertiary students succeed in their studies when a recent student survey at Victoria University found that 38 percent of students recently skipped a meal due to cost of living pressures?

Hon CHRIS PENK: No one is denying that cost of living pressures have been challenging for many New Zealanders over the last six years. In relation to the Wellington region specifically, though, I note that one of the key cost components of most student lives—being accommodation—that, actually, within the Wellington region, the rent costs have reduced across the board within the region against a number of different measures or different data sets measuring that. In relative terms, they have had an easier ride in the last few years in relation to rent, but beyond that, in terms of cost of living pressures, the Government's undertaken a number of measures to alleviate that pressure.

Shanan Halbert: Why has she allowed tertiary tuition fees to increase by 19 percent since 2024 when students are already struggling with the cost of living?

Hon CHRIS PENK: It's important to place costs on students—and indeed, again, all New Zealanders—in the context of support provided by the taxpayer through Government. These include student allowances for those who are eligible; loan living costs, as well as more general student loan availability; accommodation benefits and training incentive allowance; and for those eligible, childcare, health, and disability costs for urgent or unexpected costs, along with Working for Families tax credits to assist families with dependent children under 18.

Shanan Halbert: Is 70 percent of survey respondents at Victoria University saying they are considering leaving the country after graduation a sign that, under this Government, young New Zealanders can only hope to realise their potential if they go overseas?

Hon CHRIS PENK: No, and I note the departures of New Zealanders overseas, including to Australia, has slowed in recent times, and certainly compared with the time before this Government came into power. I also note that New Zealanders are increasingly returning to these shores as they see greater opportunities on this side of the Tasman.

Shanan Halbert: If she was really helping students achieve their potential, would she have had something to say to the Victoria University students rallying to secure their future outside of these walls today?

Hon CHRIS PENK: I say to those students and, indeed, other students, and, indeed, all New Zealanders around the country, that we're working hard as a Government to provide great opportunities, and we would welcome the support from across the House for job creating opportunities such as those enabled under the Fast-track Approvals Act and many other measures.

YOUTH

Question No. 12

Dr VANESSA WEENINK (National—Banks Peninsula) (15:00) to the **Minister for Youth:** What recent announcements has he made about supporting young people?

Hon JAMES MEAGER (Minister for Youth) (15:00): Over recent months, I have announced a number of initiatives to support young people across New Zealand; these include new investments through the Youth Development Partnership and Innovation Fund supporting more than one thousand young people. These partnerships will support young people to re-engage in education and strengthen their pathways to employment. Critically, these investments are being matched by community and philanthropic funding partners, doubling the amount of financial support being brought into the youth sector at no additional taxpayer cost. Can I quickly take the opportunity to welcome students from the Strengthening Democracy Project at Parliament here today. I hope their visit has been enlightening.

Katie Nimon: What recent announcements has he made to support young people in Wairoa?

Hon JAMES MEAGER: I thank the hard-working member for her question. I recently announced a new funding partnership in Wairoa, with the Wairoa Young Achievers Trust receiving \$100,000 from taxpayers, matched by a further \$100,000 from community funding partners including the New Zealand Police, Eastern & Central Community Trust, and First Light Community Foundation. This investment will support more than 80 young people to re-engage in education, improve their attendance, and strengthen their pathways into employment.

Rima Nakhle: What recent support has he announced for young people in Waikato and Auckland?

Hon JAMES MEAGER: In Auckland, Mana 2022 Incorporated and Action Education Incorporated will receive \$600,000 from taxpayers, matched by funding from Aotearoa Lifecourse Fund and Foundation North, creating a \$1.2 million investment that will support more than 300 young people to re-engage in education and successfully transition into the workforce. In the

Waikato, the Government is investing \$436,000, matched by the Hauraki Māori Trust Board, Lotteries, and the Len Reynolds Trust, creating a total investment of \$872,000. The trusts will run programmes to strengthen education, leadership, and employment pathways, support successful transition to high school, develop employability skills, and create education and work opportunities for more than 400 young people.

SPEAKER: Dr Hamish Campbell—guess where?

Dr Hamish Campbell: How will the recent investment in Christchurch support young people?

Hon JAMES MEAGER: I'm sure you'll be happy to know that Te Ora Hou Ōtautahi received \$750,000 in funding to re-engage young people in education in Christchurch. That is being matched by the Rātā Foundation and the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust, for a total of \$1.5 million of total investment over three years. Youth workers at Te Ora Hou Ōtautahi will support more than 300 young people to transition from intermediate to secondary school. Through this community-led support, we expect to see an increase in school attendance and improved academic performance. These are Government priorities as we continue to fix the basics and build the future of New Zealand's education and workforce systems.

SPEAKER: That concludes oral questions.

Debates

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS—GENERAL DEBATE COMMENTS

Urgent Debate Declined

SPEAKER: Members, I've received a letter from the Hon Carmel Sepuloni seeking to debate, under Standing Order 399, comments made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the general debate of 29 July. This is a particular case of recent occurrence for which there is ministerial responsibility. However, having considered the application and the rationale for it, it does not appear that there is any matter in it that is immediately urgent. There are other means to test the Government's position on international relations. The application is declined.

We'll take 30 seconds to for those who need to leave the House to do so quickly and quietly.

Bills

ORANGA TAMARIKI (RESPONDING TO SERIOUS YOUTH OFFENDING) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 July.

Hon WILLOW-JEAN PRIME (Labour) (15:05): Tēnā koe e te Māngai o te Whare. I stand to take a call on the second reading of the Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill. Labour opposes this bill. Instead of making sure that all youth justice facilities have intensive wraparound therapeutic interventions that work, this Government resorts to an approach that has failed time and time again, simply because it plays well to their political base—the tough-on-crime rhetoric, the punitive approach to youth offending rhetoric.

I asked questions in the House earlier about the Government's second military-style academy, and the Minister refuses to answer those questions. The first military-style academy pilot was a failure. As the Government was warned that this would not succeed and that it has a high chance of a failure rate, they ignored expert evidence and pushed ahead regardless. We know that, in that case, eight out of nine of the young people went on to reoffend. Today, I asked the Minister questions in the House about the current military-style academy that is under way and asked why two young people voluntarily left the in-residence component of the latest military-style academy. Once again, the Minister refuses to answer any questions about that.

We are opposed to this bill for many reasons. First and foremost, our approach—Labour's approach—is to implement policies that are evidence based and shown to work. What is known across the world about military-style approaches to youth offending is that they do not work and

they can cause harm. In fact, I want to quote Mana Mokopuna's submission on this bill, which put it clearly: "International and domestic evidence is clear that military-style approaches to youth justice do not work in the long-term and frequently causes further harm for mokopuna who have already experienced lives of trauma. Nothing that is 'military-style' in character should be written into New Zealand law as a sentencing option or be used in the rehabilitation of mokopuna—interventions need to be informed by the evidence base of what works to prevent cycles of offending and give effect to our obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Te Tiriti."

Harm continues in our youth justice facilities. About the time this bill was introduced to the House, we were acknowledging the apology that the Prime Minister gave on behalf of the Crown for decades of egregious neglect, abuse, and harm of young people in care, including in military-style academies and youth justice programmes. The royal commission into abuse in care included, in their report, an entire chapter on the notorious Te Whakapakari bootcamp, where the most heinous abuse occurred. We know that abuse still occurs today. Young people in youth justice facilities continue to experience abuse and harm, both from their peers and from staff. We need to pay heed to what the royal commission told us, we need to listen to survivors of abuse in care, and we need to learn from what went wrong in the past. Introducing this bill and pushing ahead despite the outcomes of the pilot and what they are seeing in the current military-style academy does none of that.

The learnings from the pilot: the Prime Minister, when this was put to him, said that he didn't care whether it does or doesn't work because they were going to do it anyway. The Government justified having the pilot military-style academy as a way to learn about what worked and what didn't work, and then they would adjust the bill. The pilot tests an approach to learn from it, assesses what was learnt, and decides whether to do it again or not. This isn't what happened here. The pilot military-style academy was still in progress when the bill was introduced to the Social Services and Community Committee. The pilot itself was not a success, with similar rates of reoffending to what occurred when young people go through the usual youth justice facilities.

There were also key differences in relation to what was in the pilot and what is in this legislation. That raises further questions about the negative impact of this legislation—for instance, the pilot was voluntary, and the legislation mandates military-style academies as a sentencing option. There is an importance difference: voluntary participation has an impact on the experience and outcomes, and voluntary participation also means that young people can leave the military-style academy if they are experiencing harm. The legislation does not allow for that, and, as we have seen with the most recent military-style academy, two young people voluntarily left the in-residence phase of the military-style academy. That cannot happen under this legislation.

Also in the pilot, it was 12 weeks in residence, whereas in the legislation it allows for up to 12 months. We know that the longer a young person spends time in residence, it increases institutionalisation and isolation, potentially impacting negatively on the young person, particularly when they have no option to leave the military-style academy.

The pilot was also a cohort of young people who started and finished together. The legislation does not appear to account for this, with the potential for young people to be coming and going off the military-style academy sentences. This can have a negative impact on them.

It is not clear what the pilot was supposed to test, given that this legislation is so different from what was in the pilot. The pilot didn't teach us anything that we didn't already know, and that is that the best approaches are wraparound and therapeutic, and not military in any way.

We know that this bill is discriminatory. When we look at the young people who are most likely to be sentenced to a military-style academy, 85 percent of the young people directly affected by this bill will be Māori, and yet the bill was not developed in partnership with Māori. There was no consultation and there was no reasonable and good-faith engagement. Māori, Pasifika, rangatahi whaikaha, and rangatahi with neuro-diversities and neuro-disabilities are overrepresented in the youth justice system. It will be these already vulnerable groups of young people who will bear the brunt of this risk.

There were a lot of submissions on the negative aspects of labelling our young people as "young serious offenders". Again, it suits the political rhetoric and it suits the punitive rhetoric that we

have heard. What we found out through the select committee process was that it is not required administratively, and so why is that label being put on young people?

I have only two minutes left to make further contributions. I want to turn to the fact that there are important details in this legislation that are being left to regulation. It is one of the many concerns that we have with this bill that a great deal of detail is going to be in regulations, including the implementation, operation, and monitoring of military-style academy programmes and providers, and safeguards for the use of force and actions that must be taken to ensure a young person subject to the young serious offender declaration receives the appropriate standard of care. All of those really important things are not in the primary legislation, and they are being left for regulations.

The widening of the use of force is something that concerned many, many submitters. That has been left to regulations.

The safeguards around the widening of the use of force powers is going to be done in regulation. The Social Services and Community Committee has not had the opportunity to see and scrutinise what any of that is. Extending the use of force powers to third-party providers, who may not receive appropriate training and support, simply heightens the risk of harm to these young people.

To sum it up: given that this bill is likely to pass, we will be bringing amendments to the committee of the whole House for consideration to reduce the potential harm that could be caused to young people. But it must be clear and on record that the Labour Party opposes this bill, and we believe the sentencing of children to a military-style academy has no place in legislation.

TAMATHA PAUL (Green—Wellington Central) (15:15): Alongside youth and social workers, parents, criminologists, psychologists, judges and lawyers, survivors of abuse in State care, the outgoing Children's Commissioner, and mokopuna themselves, the Greens completely and in the strongest terms oppose this bill and have from the beginning.

Now, this Government likes to claim credit for a reduction in youth offending that was already happening. I hope that every New Zealander completely rejects the moral panic that has been whipped up in this House by the Minister who is meant to protect the most vulnerable children in this country to make it out like things are much worse than they really are. If you actually look at evidence—which should be the absolute fundamental basis of any legislation that concerns vulnerable children—you will see that for decades, youth crime has been in decline, bar a spike during the COVID-19 lockdowns. That's not something that any one Government can take credit for. That's because, finally, as a country, we'd gotten smart enough to accept that punishing children does not get the outcomes that it intends. It has never worked, and it will never work.

What the spike in youth offending during the COVID-19 lockdowns showed us is that—and this was acknowledged by the Minister of Police at the time—if children aren't able to be in school or in their communities, and they are stuck at home in unsafe environments, they will offend. That is exactly what these military-style academies, or "boot camps" as everybody else calls them, do. Let's start with the boot camps. There's a lot to say on this ill, and I'm going to try and break it down, but 10 minutes simply isn't enough time to explain why this bill is so deeply cruel and callous.

The military boot camps are a complete slap in the face of every person who was abused in State care that this House apologised to two years ago. In fact, Sonja Cooper, one of the lawyers who has been standing in solidarity with survivors, actually said that the military-style academies are like giving the fingers to the royal commission. That's because it's not learning from our history. As the previous speaker just said, there was a boot camp on Great Barrier Island called Whakapakari in the 1970s where children were abused and tortured. The three main settings of that boot camp that allowed for that abuse to take place were the lack of safeguards, untrained staff, and the fact that it was in an isolated location.

That is completely reminiscent of what is taking place in these boot camps, where you have a lack of safeguards in this bill—which will be developed "later on" as part of the regulations once this bill is already in law—it gives power to third-party providers and there are no standards for what level of training or expertise those staff have to have, and the trials for this boot camp were again in an isolated location. Most of the participants are from Auckland, and they were chucked

down do Palmerston North and isolated from their communities and their families. Can we not see that this is repeating history again?

All of the evidence points to the fact that boot camps do not work. There is not one shred of international or domestic evidence whatsoever that military-style interventions work to reduce crime. But there is plenty of evidence that says that trauma can indeed be inflicted or compounded by the military-style, short sharp shock type of interventions provided for in this bill. Even the New Zealand Defence Force, the voice on military, expressed serious concerns to Oranga Tamariki around the boot camps. That is why this kind of approach will never work.

Let's talk about the trial for a minute as well. The trial that was piloted on these boot camps actually never mattered in the first place, because this legislation was already written before the pilot had even been completed or evaluated. Not to mention, a pilot should always try and replicate the conditions that it is meant to operate with in real life, but the trial of these boot camps could not be further from what the boot camps will actually be. The pilot was voluntary; the actual boot camps will be compulsory. The pilot was 12 weeks; the actual bill proposes 12 months. Incentives were offered to the participants in this trial, such as less time in detention, which will not be reflected in real life. The pilot itself had far more resources than most youth justice residences even have to run a military-style academy, and the pilot's participants had not been designated as young serious offenders, as proposed in the bill, which may have affected their actual experience.

Every child in the trial was given hundreds of thousands of dollars of resources, which they deserve, because they have been failed by multiple systems. The reality of when these are implemented is each child that passes through this boot camp will not be given that level of care and attention and resource—that they deserve, but will not get—because this Government threw everything into this pilot to try and make it work. Guess what! It still failed. In the end, what it shows is that even with children from the most troubled backgrounds, given all of this resource, given access to the highest level of officials, it is a broken model, and no matter how much you try to change what it really is on the inside, it simply will not work.

The young serious offender label is something that we're deeply disturbed by. That's because when you label a young person when their brain is still developing, it creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. We feel that labelling a young person will have detrimental lifelong impacts on how that young person sees themselves, how they see their place within society, and how they see their lifetime's potential. To be clear, there is absolutely no administrative or legal benefit to designating human beings or children as young serious offenders. We heard that from the Criminal Bar Association New Zealand. We heard that from YouthLaw Aotearoa. We heard it from people who work in the courts, from judges to lawyers, who say that there is no benefit to this, except a sick punishment from this Government, who went around campaigning on cracking down on the most vulnerable kids in our country.

Did this House not learn the lesson on what happens when you label a group of young people? There were some young Māori men that stood before a court in Lower Hutt, and guess what! They were labelled mongrels. They were labelled mongrels, and guess what their life turned out to be? That is how the Mongrel Mob was created. We don't realise that these labels can also become badges of honour. Experts came and spoke to us about that, and they said be careful when you create a label like a young serious offender, because it might become a badge that people actually want to earn. What we know about youth offending is that these activities, like ram raiding, become a badge of honour. They do it for social licence, to impress their friends in some cases. Congratulations, you've just handed them another badge of honour to earn.

The other thing that we're deeply concerned about is the fact that this bill legislates for police and third-party providers to be able to use force against young people. For the record, there is never a reason where force should be used against children. That was the overwhelming sentiment from people who work with children—actually work with some of the most difficult violent children—they've said there is never an excuse for violence, or force, because if you use that against a child, you are telling them that they, too, are able to use violence and force to get what they want. Some people make the argument that we have to use force to prevent children from absconding from these youth justice residences, and we say to that, children do not try to escape from an environment that meets all of their needs.

We know for a fact that there is some dodgy behaviour happening in those youth justice residences, and Korowai Manaaki is the worst. That is why those kids keep jumping up on the roof. We heard today in question time what's been going on in Korowai Manaaki, but the Minister won't let any of us into the youth justice residence to actually see what's going on. There have been consistent reports from Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture monitoring to say that there are dodgy dealings going on in Korowai Manaaki. I've got 30 seconds left. I haven't even touched all of the details within the bill, because it is that disgusting of a bill.

We think that it is wrong to try and be tough on people, and young people, whose lives have been tougher than any of us could fathom, and that is why we are in complete, staunch opposition to this disgusting bill and the boot camps.

RYAN HAMILTON (National—Hamilton East) (15:26): Thank God Tamatha Paul is not in charge, and may she stay in Opposition for a very long time. To try and conflate the abuse in State care with this bill is ludicrous. The Opposition, especially the Greens, have memories like goldfish. The trauma, which was experienced in 2022-2023, well past COVID by the way, goes to the business owners and members of the public who experienced ram raids right through Hamilton in the malls, and other centres across the country. This is just another example of proactive, measured law and order and community safety that may well be the necessary intervention that these young people need.

JAMIE ARBUCKLE (NZ First) (15:26): I rise on behalf of New Zealand First to support the Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill. Firstly, I'd just like to thank the select committee and the amendments that they've made to this bill. But it is with no pleasure to be standing when we are talking about our future generation of 14- to 17-year-olds that this bill is actually targeted at.

We are talking about serious crime committed—multiple high-penalty offences—the most serious offences that we could think of. It is declaring a YSO—and I know, Mr Speaker, you don't like acronyms, it's a young serious offender—but it is targeting those most serious cases, and it is about these youth that have been out of control, causing persistent crime in our communities, and on this side of the House we believe that there should be consequences for your actions.

One thing is about restoring public safety. This Government wants to make sure that public safety is restored, so making sure that for offenders that are committing the most offences, there are actually programmes put in place. It's also about rehabilitation and focused interventions, and we have heard about the military-style academies. This is a tool in the tool box; it's not used all the time, but it is a tool that can be used. There needs to be effective deterrence, and having children and being a family, or anything, you need to be able to teach consequence, and sometimes deterrence, and actually having programmes, if there's consequence when you do something—that's where you can end up—it actually a tool in itself.

This legislation makes a significant step towards addressing the complexities of youth offending, ensuring that our justice system serves both the offenders' rehabilitation needs and the public's demands for safety and accountability. New Zealand First strongly supports this bill as a fair and necessary response to serious youth crime in New Zealand, and I commend the bill to the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: This is a split call—Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke.

HANA-RAWHITI MAIPI-CLARKE (Te Pāti Māori—Hauraki-Waikato) (15:29): Tēnā rā koe e te Pīka, otirā tēnā rā tātou e te Whare. E tū ana ahau ki te waha i ngā kōrero mō Te Pāti Māori i te pō nei ki tēnei o ngā pire.

[Greetings to you, Mr Speaker; indeed, to all of us in the House. I stand to give voice to the comments of the Māori Party today regarding this bill.]

We completely oppose this bill. This bill establishes a serious offender declaration and a new military-style academy order in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 if the young person is aged 14 to 17 years old at the time of offending, the young person has two or more eligible offences punishable by at least 10 years or imprisonment. This bill takes rangitahi who have already been failed by our system, brands them as “young serious offenders”, and sends them further into the very institutions that have repeatedly caused harm. A label is not a solution. A bootcamp is not rehabilitation. Māori children now make up over 53 percent of all tamariki in severe struggle across

Aotearoa. One in four tamariki Māori are growing up in whānau that can't afford basics—that's 77,000 children.

Aotearoa has tried this before, as activity camps, bootcamps, and institutions. Even the Government's own evaluation cannot justify turning this pilot into law. Only 11 rangitahi participated; all were Māori. The evaluators themselves said larger numbers and long-term analyses were needed before strong conclusions could be drawn.

The Social Services and Community Committee received 5,405 submissions in total. Nearly all submitters expressed a clear position on the bill. Of the total submissions, 24 supported the bill and 5,346 did not. So 66 percent of those appearing in the Youth Court are Māori—that's 14 percent of the population; no conclusive evidence that military-style academies work. New research published in the *MAI Journal* 2026 speaks directly to this bill. The study draws on a wānanga with 11 kaupapa Māori social workers, youth workers, and organisational leaders, working closely with rangitahi Māori involved in serious offending. When the State mistakes trauma for defence and responds with control instead of care, restraint instead of relationship, and punishment instead of healing, a military-style academy is built around that very misunderstanding. It sees the behaviour but refuses to understand the context that created it.

I'm often whakama to talk about kaupapa and polices that relate to Oranga Tamariki matters because my upbringing has been the complete antithesis of this. Te reo Māori was my first language, access to my culture, growing up on my papakāinga whenua, not even being able to just visit my pepeha but live on my pepeha. I've often seen that as a privilege, but it isn't a privilege; these are basic rights that all tamariki Māori should have access to across the country. These are the legislations that are in front of tamariki who have kai, whenua, health, education, and housing needs.

So I ask this side of the Government, who is consistently interjecting into my kōrero: what is this Government doing to address those needs? Instead of creating different ways of punishing rangatahi who are in State care, who are reoffending, what are the contexts behind it? You have to ask yourself: why are rangatahi going up on the roofs? Why are rangatahi actually in State care in the first place? Let's answer that. Because these are the policies in legislation, this is the finding: there is no evidence as to how a military-style bootcamp will be successful in removing tamariki Māori outside of State care.

I want to acknowledge the kōrero of my colleague Tamatha Paul for the Green Party. Two of the most experiences that I've had here in Parliament is listening to the removal of section 7AA from the Oranga Tamariki Act and being a rangatahi Māori in one of the highest positions in governance roles in the country and not being able to assist tamariki who are on the roofs of Korowai Manaaki, and that's what we have talked about tonight. Because we should be able to get tamariki out of State care and the legislation that affects it, not punish them even more.

KAHURANGI CARTER (Green) (15:34): I rise to speak on the Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill, and to confirm that the Green Party opposes this legislation, alongside survivors of abuse in care, kids currently in State care, kids who have been through the system, experts, and those at the flax-roots, along with a plethora of Social Services and Community Committee submitters.

The ideology behind this bill is based on punishment, rather than what works. It's a bill based on flawed thinking—that if we become tougher on young people, we will reduce offending. There is no evidence to show that this will happen. I challenge the Government MPs to think about radical love. When you show someone love and you wrap support around them and their families, they can do great things. When we ensure that people have access to a community, rehabilitation, and all of the things they need, we make our society safer.

This bill is a national shame, and I am embarrassed for members who cheer on such cruelty towards our young people, who often have never seen anything except cruelty. Government parties and the Minister in charge have been kicking these young people around like a political football for years, and it has to stop. All through the 2023 campaign, National campaigned on being tough on crime. Things like "Your bootcamps didn't work but ours will.", instead of looking at evidence, instead of resourcing the communities that prevent this harm from happening, instead of ensuring that children in Aotearoa don't grow up in poverty. These are things that this

Government could be focusing on, but instead they're sticking to that ideology of tough on crime and cruelty, and I'm ashamed.

This tough on crime rhetoric came amid rising poverty, hefty cuts to community programmes—programmes that were working with youth—and other policies affecting vulnerable families. We've got a Government who is pushing through with things like cancelling emergency housing, they have cancelled emergency food parcels, bringing in benefit sanctions, and making it harder for young people to access a benefit if they're disabled or in cancer treatment. The Minister has continued to use these kids as a political football, until the bootcamp pilot was a complete failure, and then the Minister started refusing to have any transparency around the trial when it didn't work for them and their narrative.

In the Green Party, we believe in ensuring that every child in Aotearoa grows up with safety, stability, and aroha. It is clear from the actions of this Government, from the policies that they choose to prioritise, that this is not a vision that we share. I believe that the young people in this country can be the best that they can possibly be when we give them all of the things they need.

Gosh, there's so much to say on this bill and only a few more minutes to say it. Let's just look into one area: it is labelling these kids as "serious young offenders". Young people are not simply statistics, labels, or problems to be managed. They are young people who have experienced profound trauma, instability, neglect, abuse, poverty, and disconnection from their communities; many are neurodivergent; many have experienced significant failures in the systems that were meant to support them.

In the Green Party, we have a plan to ensure that children in this country have everything that they need and their families are supported. That is a future we believe in and that is a future that we will continue to fight for.

NANCY LU (National) (15:39): Let's come back to the evidence. The evidence is that there are a small, small, small group of youth offenders who repeatedly commit very serious offences around the country, who, under the current justice system, are not being properly rehabilitated, they are not paying the price for the consequences, and that is putting the victims at the top of harm. I cannot believe that the Opposition parties would go about aroha and everything else, without putting victims first. This is the National Party who's serious about restoring law and order and building the future for all New Zealanders.

HELEN WHITE (Labour—Mt Albert) (15:40): Madam Speaker, thank you. In response to the last speaker, there are about 850 of these children who are in this category, according to Judge Ida Malosi, who's done this work all her life.

I want to start by—I thought about what the public out there would want to know, and I thought about how it was perfectly legitimate to worry about safety. That's often the accusation levelled at the Opposition when we object to these kinds of bills. And I thought, do we really want to solve this problem? We've got 850 children who are really worrying in their behaviour and might be called serious offenders, and might very much grow into them. What do we do if we really want to solve the problem?

The answer is not this bill. In fact, the reality is that this bill is very likely going to end up with more victims of violence than if we didn't have it. That's a real concern. I want to explain why that is. I was on the Social Services and Community Committee, so I listened to submitters. The first thing we probably need to do is listen to submitters in this House more often than we do, because most of them were appalled at this piece of legislation.

I want to, in the spirit of debate, also talk about the issue raised by Ryan Hamilton today where, again, he criticised the Opposition parties for raising the issue of the boot camps that were part of the inquiry into abuse of children. Well, that's not something that we did alone. That's something that submitter after submitter did. They raised that issue, because at the base of it is the same problem. In the issue of abuse in the boot camps that happened on Great Barrier Island, etc., people thought that they were just producing disciplined children. They thought what they were doing was a short, sharp shock; that it was bringing about a discipline in those children. In fact, it was abuse, and it caused great trauma and it didn't fix the problem. We ended up, as Tamatha Paul said, with people who joined the gangs. That's what happened. So there is a really natural connection between those things and saying we need to learn those lessons.

I don't think it's fair to simply poke holes in something without talking about a solution. I want to talk about one today that I haven't heard talked about in this debate. I want to talk about that wraparound and what it looks like, and what's wrong with the bill today in comparison to what we know works.

Now, there's a film that everybody who's watching this should watch. It's called *BackTrack Boys* and it's an Australian film, and it's about a man who won Australian of the Year and his entity he set up that takes on children in this category, who would be serious youth offenders. He takes on these children, and you can watch through the documentary what he does that works. What they did differently was they said, "All right, these kids, we're going to invite them into a community and we're going to build their community. We're going to make sure that they know each other in an environment and we're going to work with them, and with animals." They actually work with dogs, so they build a rapport with an animal and they help train the animal, and they have an activity that they go out to and they sit around campfires and they do things together and they share stories. One of the things I remember him saying was that there is a myth out there that young boys don't talk. When they're around a campfire in that sort of situation, they talk about their feelings. He builds that and that self-discipline in the context of a community that loves those kids.

One of the things they do is they say that once you're in the BackTrack group, you never leave. You're there; you've always got the right to come back. So he creates a community that never rejects that child. That is even when those children offend and go to prison—even then, they're there, beside those kids. It's the most beautiful movie about what happens to those children. One actually does go to jail during the during the programme, and it is devastating to see this kid close down in an environment that is not suitable for children. What you can actually do now, because that movie was made a few years ago, is you can actually look and see what happened to those children. Some joined apprenticeships, and some ended up leading programmes like that all around that part of Australia. They have ended up being able to help each other and help children who are in similar positions.

Now I want to contrast that with what we see here. We have a situation here where people will be stuck in a situation they can't get out of. Remember that they're little kids. If you watch the movie, think about a kid like Rusty going through this process. They will be away from their families. They will be away from their support. They will be in an environment that's completely alien. They will lose all power over the situation. They will be in our construct, which is that we are teaching them discipline, etc., but they will not have those things that were given to these children in the movie. They will not have ongoing support in the way that they should, and they will end up in a situation where they are then out of that programme and back in a community that may well be dysfunctional—because, after all, they're there in the first place, right?

What we will have done is we will have lost an opportunity with those children when we are absolutely aware that other programmes work. I've suggested to you one that comes from Australia, but we have wraparound programmes here that were working and that we continue with. But we are taking this group of children out of the situation, and we are putting them into something that the evidence simply does not support works.

What I think we would all agree on in this House is that the children we are dealing with have come from high-trauma situations, and we know a lot about trauma now. We know what we have to do when we want to rewire the brain. We know how important it is to build community. We know what we need to do, and yet we are not doing it. What we are doing is pouring a massive amount of money in the wrong direction. And why are we doing it? Maybe because we don't want to accept the reality of what has gone on.

That is not soft; it's not woke. It's the reality that we have a group of children in this country that are utterly disconnected—that are mainly Māori, actually. We live in a country with a record of deep poverty in that very community, deep disconnection with whānau in those very communities. We know that, and we have to face it if we're going to be grown-ups, but we also need to face it if we're going to come up with a solution that protects our citizens from violence.

So I say to Nancy Lu, specifically, who raised the issue that she thinks that she is tough on crime and we are not: this is actually the tougher approach on crime. I am not talking about adopting a system that doesn't work and doesn't keep New Zealanders safe. That is a strawman. That is

manipulating the public sphere. I am talking about building a system that keeps people safe and deals with trauma in this country effectively, so we don't end up with gang members on the street, so we don't end up with people raping our citizens, because that is what is built by this method. We alienate people, we retraumatise them, because somehow it makes us feel better, and we do it totally denying the evidence that's there. Now, we know the evidence is there and I want to go back to the submitters. We had a lot of submissions—about 5,000 submissions. I think there were a handful, though, that were actually for this. Most of those submissions came from people who know much better than me—

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

PAULO GARCIA (National—New Lynn) (15:50): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill deals with a small cohort of young people who repeatedly and seriously commit offences and these young people commit the largest portion of youth offending. It is a much-needed intervention into their lives. I commend this bill to the House.

Hon JENNY SALESA (Labour—Panmure-Ōtāhuhu) (15:50): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to debate the Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill, and the Labour Party strongly opposes this bill. I would like to start with a number: seven out of 10. Seven out of 10 young people who went through this Government's military-style academy pilot reoffended, and most of them within two months of coming home. That is not a rumour. That is not a talking point from us on this side of the House. That is numbers from the Government's own independent evaluation of the Government's own programme.

Now, here is what should trouble and worry all of us as members of this House of Parliament in Aotearoa: we have seen this before. In 2009 and 2010, New Zealand ran military-style camps for young offenders under a previous National-led Government. They cost a great deal, and they did not make much difference to reoffending compared with simply keeping those same young people in a standard youth justice residence. Now, that finding sat in a ministry report, as I understand; a report that was so relevant that officials dug it up and circulated it to Oranga Tamariki staff in March 2024 while they were designing this very pilot. It was a warning against the pitfalls that might face this pilot if they were to go ahead with it. But what happened? Well, this coalition Government were warned, but they built the same programme anyway.

I do not doubt that each member of this House, especially those on the other side of the House, would want fewer young people offending, fewer victims, and they would like safer communities. All of us on the side of the House, we all want that as well. I'm sure that everyone, every parent, and every electorate, including my own from South Auckland in Panmure-Ōtāhuhu, we want that as well. This is not a debate about whether we as members of Parliament care. It is actually a debate about whether we're willing to do what is actually something that works, or what evidence tells us works, or whether we would rather be seen to be tough.

Because the evidence—not opinion; the actual evidence—tells us clearly what works and what does not. Not just evidence from here in Aotearoa New Zealand; international research reviewing 12 different types of youth justice interventions found that discipline-based boot camp models sit at the very bottom. Some evidence suggests that they can make things worse. On the top are family-focused support, skills-based programmes, and sustained mentoring in the community—not up to 12 months' residence with mentoring bolted on as an afterthought. What works is sustained, resourced, whole-of-childhood support.

This is not my view, or even the Opposition or our party's view. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists told the Social Services and Community when they came to present that this bill's predecessor, and I quote, "failed to demonstrate any value". The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, standing with more than 20 child and youth organisations, told this Parliament that our tamariki are taonga, not serious youth offenders to be labelled and shipped off, at high risk of re-traumatisation, away from the very whānau and community connections that we know would keep young people safe. Save the Children and Children's Rights Alliance told us the same thing. Individual New Zealanders who gave up their evenings to write submissions to this Government gave them their submissions, and so many of the submissions were along these lines.

The young people this bill is aimed at are not strangers to hardship. Of the 10 young people this Government's own pilot had, six have ADHD, three of them unmedicated; almost all had documented substance abuse. Several were dealing with anxiety, PTSD, and risk of suicide. Labour's alternative is not softness, it is rigour. It is investing, before a child ever reaches a youth court door, in housing, in mental health, in support, in whānau, and in iwi and community organisations who know these young people's names and their family's history. We oppose this bill strongly.

STUART SMITH (National—Kaikōura) (15:55): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I agree wholeheartedly with one of the points the previous speaker just made: that we all want the best for the young people in New Zealand. As a patron of the Limited Service Volunteers, I have seen the difference it has made in young people's lives and have really turned their lives around, so I wholeheartedly commend this bill to the House.

Dr TRACEY McLELLAN (Labour) (15:56): Thank you, Madam Speaker. There comes a point when you listen to the contributions in this House, and I wasn't on the Social Services and Community, and I don't profess to being an expert in youth justice, but the evidence that's been provided through this process—the little bit of research that it takes to look at the evidence that's been provided over a long period of time—is so overwhelming that you do have to ask yourself: who in their right mind would continue to pursue something that just doesn't stack up?

This is one of those cases, and the cynic in me says, (a) it's this Government, (b) because they're trying to achieve something else. It's not this. They're trying to signal to the wider public, many of whom live busy lives, who don't pay a lot of attention, who aren't particularly engaged in politics and the finer nuances of evidence-based decision-making for the future of this country, but a little bit of a sound bite sounds good to them. The whole kind of boot camp tough on crime rhetoric resonates with some pretty decent people who, if you engage them in some conversation, doesn't take long even for them to realise that things like this don't actually work and they don't make as much sense as that knee-jerk reaction that they may have first had to it.

Yet here we are pursuing after a pilot that we've heard from contributions on this side of the House didn't seem to be all that good, that hasn't finished, that the evidence hasn't even been properly analysed and worked into the next stage of this, and yet here we are already pursuing at second reading the next iteration of something that's a failed experiment. It's really disheartening to listen to these contributions, because it's not like all of this effort to signal to the wider public—a minority of the wider public potentially—that they're tough on crime and that boot camps are somehow good. It's not like there's no negative consequences for anybody in that scenario. There's actually young people's lives that are concerned here, and we should be doing what we can to make that better and not worse.

Look, Labour obviously, clearly, does not support this bill. We all agree with the fact that we clearly want safer communities. That's a no-brainer. We clearly want and acknowledge the fact that when young people, including serious recidivist offenders, continue to offend, they need to be held accountable. But we should be doing something to actually make that stop, something that really reduces reoffending, something that reduces future victims, and something that just quite simply helps those young people change the course of their life.

Whilst I said that I wasn't any kind of expert in youth justice, I have been and seen my fair share of adult justice, and am not unfamiliar with the prison system per se. I'm not unfamiliar with the mental health system and with various other institutions and institutionalised processes where we find our broken people in society for which many of whom, with the benefit of some early intervention, could have lived very different lives. Military-style programmes, as I said, sound tough, but toughness is not the same as effectiveness. These approaches should not now be written into this law, and interventions should instead be based on evidence.

I also want to take the time to acknowledge one group in particular who do do good work in this area, and they're certainly not soft on crime. They're certainly not pursuing things that are not grounded in evidence. But I would like to acknowledge Dan and his team at the St John of God Waipuna in Christchurch, who run a specialised outdoor rehab and often work with some of the very same cohort of young people that we're talking about here. It's not an easy job. It's not an easy programme. There's certainly nothing soft about it. It's incredibly positive because it does get good results. It does go to show that you don't have to have this punitive approach to achieve

the same outcomes. I'd like to acknowledge all of the work that they do and also acknowledge the fact that they constantly struggle for funding. Whilst this pilot seems to be a little bit gold plated and there didn't seem to be any shortage of resources in an attempt to try and make this pilot produce the results that the Government very dearly wanted it to be able to, there are plenty of good providers out there providing good programmes and doing so on the smell of an oily rag and who, in fact, have lost funding during the course of this Government, whilst this Government makes very different priorities.

Many young people in the youth justice system, as has been said, have experienced trauma, they have experienced neglect, and they've had incredibly disrupted education and family lives. All of those factors sound complicated, but they're not unknown to us, and there's a good body of well-evidenced information that does tell us how to deal with that and does tell us how to put programmes together that would be much more successful than this rubbish one.

I also want to acknowledge that the royal commission into abuse in care warned about the dangers of institutionalisation, particularly when there were weak safeguards and unchecked power, yet this bill is another example of the use of force, including by third-party providers, when the crucial details about standards monitoring, provider accountability, and the use of force are being left to regulations. I don't know if we've really discussed that much at length today, but that is something that certainly is worthy of further consideration. They're not minor details. They're actually there to provide protections and determine whether young people are safe or not, and that's important. You'd think that if this Government was hell-bent on heading further and further down this path of the bootcamp philosophy, they would at least have a better idea of how to build the safeguards into legislation and not be completely reliant on doing the legislative work first and then working out those safeguards later. That feels absolutely wrong.

When I looked at some of the submissions—as I said, I wasn't on the select committee—I noted that there were a huge number of submissions, 5,404, but that only 24 submissions supported the bill. That's an incredible ratio of people that took time and applied their expertise and applied their lived experience and knowledge to making sure that their views were heard in opposition to this bill. Many of the submitters considered that the bill breached Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and impacts on Māori, human rights, Pacific, youth, and all of those other neurodivergent and disabled young people. Issues were raised during the select committee process, none of which seemed to have made any difference to the Government in terms of proceeding with this bill.

It's also worth noting that it wasn't just advice from submitters—it wasn't just the information that they were able to provide. In the regulatory impact statement, officials outlined that there was a lack of evidence underpinning the military-style component. The regulatory impact statement cautions for the need to balance the rights of the child with public safety, and no one is suggesting that one of those elements of absolute concern needs to take precedent over the other. There are ways to achieve win-wins with both of those factors in regard. It just feels like this has been a cheap and nasty, short-sighted, shallow, and somewhat vacuous attempt at providing a solution to a real problem, but a real problem that is worthy of a lot more thought than what this bill provides.

The choice, as I said, is not between simply doing nothing. No one is suggesting that. The choice isn't between doing nothing or supporting this bill. That's a false choice. We can respond firmly to serious youth offending. We have responded firmly to serious youth offending in the past. The Circuit Breaker programme was incredibly, incredibly successful. If you resource things properly and you provide that wraparound service and you get on to it quickly, there are absolute ways of being able to deal with serious youth offending. If you prioritise rehabilitation and if you actually, actually prioritise mental health and addiction support and look at the basics like safe accommodation—we are incarcerating women at 2.7 times the rate of men at the moment, often for theft and for lower-level crimes that no man would go to jail for, because of a lack of bail housing. We are risk of doing the same to our young people. We do not support this bill.

Dr HAMISH CAMPBELL (National—Ilam) (16:06): This is a very serious matter, which we're talking about. Nobody in New Zealand wants to see youth carrying out serious offences. We also do not want to see victims of serious crime. The other side here have wailed and gnashed teeth and tried to say that we are doing sound bites. I think the last speaker said, "Let's put some evidence behind it what you've actually achieved as a Government." Well, first of all, shall we look at their track record? Total victimisations rose from 2017 to 2020 here in New Zealand from

241,000 to 350,000, an increase of 46 percent. That side do not know what they're talking about when it comes to law and order. There was a 400 percent increase in ram raids. What's happened since we've come into Government? There's been a 22 percent decrease in youth offending. There has been 49,000 less victims of violent crime. Therefore, I commend this bill to the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is, *That the amendments recommended by the Social Services and Community Committee by majority be agreed to.*

A party vote was called for on the question, *That the amendments be agreed to.*

Ayes 67

New Zealand National 48; ACT New Zealand 11; New Zealand First 8.

Noes 51

New Zealand Labour 34; Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand 13; Te Pāti Māori 2; Ferris; Kapa-Kingi.

Amendments agreed to.

A party vote was called for on the question, *That the Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.*

Ayes 67

New Zealand National 48; ACT New Zealand 11; New Zealand First 8.

Noes 51

New Zealand Labour 34; Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand 13; Te Pāti Māori 2; Ferris; Kapa-Kingi.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE BILL

Legislative Statement

Hon CASEY COSTELLO (Minister of Customs) (16:10): on behalf of the **Minister of Justice:** I present a legislative statement on the English Language Bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: That legislative statement is published under the authority of the House and can be found on the Parliament website.

Third Reading

Hon CASEY COSTELLO (Minister of Customs) (16:10): on behalf of the **Minister of Justice:** I move, *That the English Language Bill be now read a third time.*

This is a short, straightforward bill. Its purpose is equally straightforward: to recognise in legislation what has long been assumed in New Zealand—namely, that English is an official language of our country. The bill delivers New Zealand First's commitment to legislate the official status of the English language.

Despite what has been claimed across this House, this bill is important and far from the claimed waste of time. New Zealand First campaigned on delivering this bill and made a commitment to do so. It is not trivial, unnecessary, or a distraction to this House, in a democracy, to deliver for those who elected us to this House. It is important. It is important to the hard-working Kiwi battlers we represent. It is important to those who have been packing the halls around the country in New Zealand First meetings telling us what is important to them. The self-appointed experts who stand in this House that like to think they are the arbitrators of what is important and not are not the voices New Zealand First represents.

This bill provides clarity and certainty in legislation of the status of the English language in New Zealand. As we have heard repeatedly, it was assumed that the official status already existed. What we do today is turn that assumption into reality. The Government's view is that there is value in providing clarity in law.

The bill is modest in scope. It creates no new regulatory regime, imposes no new obligations, and changes none of the existing legal protections afforded to te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language. Those languages remain official languages of New Zealand and continue to hold their place in our legislative and cultural landscape.

In a mature democracy, we should be capable of acknowledging multiple truths at once. Recognising one fact does not require us to deny another. English is the principal language through which most New Zealanders live their daily lives. Te reo Māori is valued, it's important, it's protected, and it's respected. New Zealand Sign Language provides access and inclusion for a vital community. These facts can comfortably sit alongside one another. What this bill does is recognise reality and provide legislative certainty. English has long been and will continue to be the language used by the vast majority of New Zealanders in everyday life—in business, in education, in finance, in aviation, and in interactions with public institutions. Ultimately, this is a practical measure. It aligns the statute book with long-standing practise and provides a clear statement about the status of English within New Zealand's official framework.

I want to acknowledge the work and consideration that has gone towards the bill by the Justice Committee, members of this House, officials, and the public. While this bill may be short, it is a sensible and measured piece of legislation. With that, I commend the English Language Bill to the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

CAMILLA BELICH (Labour) (16:14): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've got an English quote for you: "The lady doth protest too much, methinks." We heard a lot from the Minister Casey Costello about how this wasn't a waste-of-time bill, how it was not trivial, and how it was sensible. Well, I think the fact that that had to be emphasised so clearly in the Minister's third reading speech—which I note was of a different ilk to her contributions in committee stage, which were, I believe, more measured—indicates the truth of this bill, which is that it is in fact a total waste of time. That is because English is—according to our officials who advised us on this bill; according to the very, very thoughtful and considered submissions that we got to the Justice Committee; according to common practice; according to the common law—an official language of New Zealand already.

So why bring a bill like this to the House? Well, unfortunately, the only conclusion that one can come to is a challenge to those official languages that are already in place. It is a regretful type of dialogue, and divisive dialogue, that we don't want in New Zealand. I actually think this bill has failed to stir up the division that was feared around this bill, and I think it's because New Zealanders know that English is an official language of this country and value te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language as official languages, that, because they are spoken by a much smaller minority of the population, need legislative protection and need the fact of their own bills, that came to this House in 1987 and 2006, and that is something that this House should be proud of. They realise that there is a difference between these three languages that we have in this country, and this attempt to politicise what is a self-evident truth, I believe, has failed.

So it is self-evident, and during the previous readings on the bill I was thinking about, just as I was standing on my feet, some things which are also true in New Zealand. I thought of a few examples like, you know, the sun rising and that kind of thing, but I thought I could probably do better than that. So I thought of a few other self-evident truths that the Government may like to think about legislating for, because it would make just as much difference as this English Language Bill in practicality. I wondered if they might want to legislate for the changing of the seasons, or for the fact that there are sometimes four seasons in one day in Auckland, or whether they should legislate for the southerly winds to blow through Wellington—that might be an option that they might like to think of—or whether they should perhaps pass a bill to ensure that the sun will shine on Waitangi in the Far North, or that there'll be surf and seals in the seas of Dunedin, or that the gardens in Christchurch will flourish, or that marae will welcome manuhiri.

We know all of these things happen in New Zealand, because this is who New Zealand is. We know that English is a language spoken here. It's the official language of our courts. It's the language that we have spoken to the majority of extent in the House. There is no need for this bill, and it is regretful, when there are so many challenging issues facing New Zealand, that this is the issue that the Government has chosen to focus on.

There are pieces of legislation that would actually make a difference to New Zealanders that could be brought to the House. One of them—and I know there are fans of this bill in the House—is a bill to change the law of consent. That is something which is overdue and something that there is widespread, if not almost universal, support for in this House, but, unfortunately, we are spending time debating something which is a self-evident truth.

There are issues on the cost of living. We have some of the highest unemployment levels we've seen in decades, we've got high fuel prices, food prices are at the highest levels seen. New Zealanders are struggling, and instead of addressing these important issues facing our country, the Government—and this is a Government bill—is bringing to this House a bill which sought to provoke division—I think it has failed on that front—but also seeks to legislate for something that is already true. It is a shame to see Parliament's time wasted like this, and I will not waste another minute or second of my time debating it.

Dr LAWRENCE XU-NAN (Green) (16:19): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Unlike, the previous speaker, Camilla Belich, I will be taking my full time regarding this bill, because—

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Surprise!

Dr LAWRENCE XU-NAN: —surprise, surprise!—there is actually a lot to say about this bill. What there isn't a lot to say on is our, I guess, in some ways anti-climatic committee stage. One of the things, as we go into the third reading of any bill, is we reflect on what happened during the committee stage, but one of the challenges is that the Minister Casey Costello couldn't give us any more information, other than sound bytes, regarding the exact purpose and intentions and effect of this particular bill. Repetition doesn't make it true. Just because you say it is important and necessary, does not make it so.

One of the things that we did ask—and these are the things that we didn't actually get a response on during the committee stage—was: "What is the effect of recognition?" Now, the Minister, during the committee stage, stated that, you know, when we are looking at official languages—and the previous speaker has already stated—in overseas jurisdictions, and indeed here when we're looking at te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language, is for the protection of a particular language and also for provisions and effect of that language and what it means for Aotearoa New Zealand. But when we ask what we are protecting the English language from, what is an example where English has not been otherwise provided for? There is no response to that, because there is no instance that the Minister could think of that would make this bill fulfil any requirement of why we need to legislate or give a legislative recognition of an official language status to English.

We do that for te reo Māori because of the historical trauma that has faced tangata whenua here in Aotearoa, having their language ripped away from them. We give that to New Zealand Sign Language because of, again, the lack of recognition to our Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities and other affected communities. But it is not necessary here.

In the second reading, I already mentioned that English already has de facto status here in New Zealand; it does not need de jure status, but with this bill, without being attached to any other possible legislation—and we gave the Minister a number of examples, it could have been packaged together in a constitution Act because, then, all three languages could have equally significant and constitutional mandates, that could be something that was fitting, and we heard that from submitters; we could have specified the explicit use of New Zealand English, noting that there are a variety of different English dialects, and if we are able to use New Zealand Sign Language, we can also do that with New Zealand English. The response we got from the Minister on why that couldn't be done is logistical, as in there is too much legislation that already has the word "English" in it, which, again, begs the question of: what, then, is this bill for if it's already provided for in other legislation? Even so, any Government—any one—could have made the requirement for us to update other legislation to ensure that New Zealand English is explicitly stated.

During the committee stage, I did give a little bit of a background, I guess, of the various spellings and dialects when it comes to the English language, and why we should uphold the spelling of New Zealand English, unlike what we see across the Ditch with Australian English, which has morphed into American spelling, as opposed to British spelling. I think if the Government really cares about English as a language, these are the things that they should have considered more seriously, as opposed to this bill.

Even though we heard from the Minister that this bill is significant or important—but as we've heard from the previous speaker, Camilla Belich, as well, this bill is nothing more than a distraction. It is a waste of this House's time. If the House really wanted to improve people's lives, really wanted to give effect to something like this, there are other ways to do it, as opposed to what is, essentially, a sound bite, nothing more; nothing less. There is no additional effect to this. There's no effect in addressing other challenges that are facing our communities right now.

I think a good example of that is what my colleague Camilla Belich mentioned before with regards to the consent legislation. There is also other legislation that's been on this House's books, a number of regulatory systems amendment bills that have been sitting there for months and years because it's not on, I guess, the Government's priority lists to go through that legislation, even though those administrative bills have significant impact on people's lives. Instead, we're seeing the immediate third reading of this bill when we've just concluded the committee stage last night.

I want to also address the broader question of—and it's, again, a question I posed to the Minister, and, I guess, in some ways, it is philosophical, it is from a linguistic standpoint, it's from an etymological standpoint—what is “English”, and what do we expect out of this? If the Government is genuine about the importance of English—and I think, personally, as a linguist, that all languages are beautiful and are worth learning—

Hon Dr Duncan Webb: Ha, ha!

Dr LAWRENCE XU-NAN: Indeed, the Hon Dr Duncan Webb, I do believe that. Hand on heart, I'm saying that I am one of the few people in this House with a doctoral degree in the arts and humanities, where I've spent more than a decade of my life analysing and using linguistics, narratological, and etymological methodologies to analyse ancient texts, as well as modern texts. I spent years at the University of Auckland, lecturing students on grammar.

If we really are serious about language, or language learning in general, this alone is not what we want to see; what we want to see is the fact that we are putting in more resources towards arts and humanities at university, but instead we're seeing arts and humanities consistently underfunded, even defunded, in our university system. If you really care about English, I don't see any additional funding towards the humanities departments, whether it is English, history, ancient history, classical studies. In fact, art history is being removed from our school curriculum, because this Government doesn't think it is important enough, despite the fact that a lot of these subjects are the very foundation of the history of English.

So what is this bill for, then? In Aotearoa New Zealand, we are already seeing that we're actually one of the worst countries in the world at learning a second language. By learning a second language, you have much better appreciation for your mother tongue or for your main language. The idea that we're seeing more people learning te reo Māori, learning New Zealand Sign Language, learning Mandarin Chinese, learning Cantonese, learning Hindi, learning Punjabi, learning all sorts of different languages, should be something that we celebrate as country, rather than using this as a way of saying, “You know what? Actually, we are a little bit concerned because we think that English might be diminishing.” Look at this House. Looking at what we're doing right now. We are using English.

I do agree with the Minister that two things can be true, but what I'm not seeing is that side of the House actually championing language learning and arts and humanities as a result of this bill. That's not “Both things can be right at the same time”; that is simply hypocrisy. If this Government really cares about this, put your money where your mouth is and actually put in some general funding. The Greens will not be supporting this bill, because this bill does nothing.

SIMON COURT (ACT) (16:29): ACT supports this bill. It's very clear that many New Zealanders have been asking for English to be recognised as the important language that it is—the language where we all get vital information, and when we go to the hospital, for example, we

want to find our way to the ward, find our way to an appointment; of course the English language is important. Same if you're an air traffic controller, better make sure you're using English so the pilots understand where to land the plane. ACT supports this bill. I commend it to the House.

CARL BATES (National—Whanganui) (16:30): This bill legislates English as an official language. It makes no other changes to the legal status of te reo Māori or to New Zealand Sign Language. It's straightforward and it ensures clarity and consistency in what the official languages are here in New Zealand. I commend it to the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The next call is a split call—Oriini Kaipara.

ORIINI KAIPARA (Te Pāti Māori—Tāmaki Makaurau) (16:30): E te Pīka, e te Whare. Ka tū au i runga i te mana o te reo Māori, ka tū anō hoki au hei māngai mō taku iwi Māori, hei mema pāremata hoki o Te Pāti Māori. Kia tīkina te reo Māori hei mihi ki te kaupapa. Kāore taku kauhau i te kauhau taunu, whakaparahako rānei i te reo Pākehā, tino kore nei. Kāore ēnei kupu i te kupu whakaparahako i te Minita nāna tēnei pire i whao ki tana toki. He toki tūraki i taku reo rangatira i taku arero tīpuna, kahore. Ko tā te reo Māori e kōrero nei i roto i tēnei Whare, he whakatakoto i ngā mamae, i eke ai te reo Māori hei reo Māori whai mana i roto i te ture o tēnei whenua. Kāore i te rite te haerenga o tēnei pire, o tērā reo ki tā te haerenga, ki tō te haerenga o te reo Māori i ēnei hia rautau.

Anei te pātai, he aha te aha ka puta i tēnei kaupapa? He aha ai? He aha te take kei te whakamahia tēnei Whare, ngā hāora o ēnei mema, ngā rawa o te rāngai tūmatawhānui, ki te whakapau wā, ki te whakapau hā, ki tēnei pire i runga i te mōhio ko te reo Pākehā te reo matua o Aotearoa, o Niu Tirenī.

Kāore e whai take anō, nō reira, hokia te pātai, he aha ai? He aha te raru? He aha te āputa e whāia nei e tēnei Whare e tika ana kia whakatau ture ki te whakatika i te raru. Kāore i te kitea he raru? I kīia rā e te Minita, kāore he raru heoi anō he tukanga noa iho hei whakamana i te reo. Nō reira, mēnā kāore he raru, kāore he take. He mōmōu, he mōmōu Māori mā, he mōmōu.

E mōhio ana tātou, kua oti kē i tēnei taha te whakatakoto, te whāriki i te kōrero. Ko te pūtake o te whakamana i tētahi reo i roto i te ture i tēnei whenua he tiaki. He kaitiakitanga tērā. Āe, me tiaki tātou i ngā reo katoa. E kī ana Te Tiriti o Waitangi, me pērā tātou. Ngā reo katoa he tapu. Kei roto i Te Aho Matua i ōna mātāpono katoa, ko te reo , ngā reo katoa, e tapu ana. Nō reira me mihi ka tika ki tērā. Heoi anō tāku e kī ana, ngā reo e rua e whai mana ana kē ana i tēnei wā, te reo Māori, me te reo rota, me tiaki ka tika. He aha ai? I tata korehāhā. Nā te aha i korehāhā ai, i tata korehāhā ai te reo Māori? Ā, tēnā.

Nā tēnei Whare tonu i whakapūmau i ētahi ture hei tūraki i te reo. I whakakorea te whakaakotanga o te reo Māori i roto i ngā kura i te tau 1867. Ka pau te 120 tau i a Huirangi Waikerepuru mā? I a te nuinga o ngā toa mō te reo Māori mā. I a Koro Hirini Moko Mead, i a Pāpā Tāmāti Reedy, i a Whatarangi Winiata mā e tohe ana kia whai mana te reo Māori ki tōna whenua ake, kaua ki tēnei Whare anake. Ko tāku, kei hea te pakanga mō te reo Pākehā? Kāore i pakangatia, kāore i whakawetia, kāore i whakatumatumahia e ngā Māori, e te hunga turi, e te hunga rotarota, tino kore nei. Nō reira ko wai kei te whakatuma i te reo Pākehā?

Ko tāku ki tēnei Whare, mehemea tātou e pono ana ki ngā mātāpono o Te Tiriti, me pēnei kē. Nau mai te reo Pākehā ki te pae ōkawa o ngā reo e tiakina ana e te ture Pākehā o tēnei whenua, engari ko tāku, me rite, me taurite ngā tikanga whakahaere. Mehemea ka whakakorea te reo Māori i roto i ō tātou kura, me whakakore hoki, me whakakore hoki te reo Pākehā. Nē? He tauritetanga tērā. Me huri ki te reo Pākehā kia tika taku mihi ki te tangata, koia ko Dr Dean Knight.

[To the Speaker, to the House. I stand on the authority of the Māori language, and stand as the mouthpiece for the Māori people and as a member of Parliament for the Māori Party. Allow me to utilise the Māori language to acknowledge the topic. The purpose of my address is not to ridicule or discriminate the English language; not at all. My words are not intended to belittle the Minister who shaped this bill with his adze—the same chisel that felled my chiefly language, my ancestral tongue. No. Rather, the Māori language used here in this House is to detail the struggle that ensured the Māori language

is valid within the laws of this land. This bill has not had to endure such a struggle as that of the Māori language in the past centuries.

Here is my question: what, if at all, is the benefit of this? Why? Why is this House expending the time of the members, the resources of the public sector, to waste time and energy on this bill, with the knowledge that English is the primary language of Aotearoa, of New Zealand?

It is of no consequence, so I ask again: why? What is the issue? What issue does this House seek to rectify that it needs a law? I can't see a problem. As the Minister himself said, there is no problem, but rather a process to legitimise the English language. Therefore, if there is no problem, then there is no reason for this. What a waste—what a waste, Māori people, what a waste.

We all know that this side of the House has already laid out our message. The reason that we legitimise a language in law in this land is to protect it. That is guardianship. Yes, we should care for all languages. The Treaty of Waitangi says we should. All languages are sacred. All of Te Aho Matua's principles state that all languages are sacred. Therefore, it is only right I acknowledge that. What I am trying to say is that we already have two languages which are official languages, te reo Māori and sign language, and they should be both protected. Why? They were almost lost. Why were they almost lost; why was the Māori language almost lost?

It was as a result of this House enacting a law to abolish the language. Māori language instruction was banned in schools in 1867. Huirangi Waikerepuru and others struggled for 120 years. The majority of our Māori language champions, such as Hirini Moko Mead, Tāmāti Reedy, Whatarangi Winiata, and others, fought for the language to be recognised in its own land, not just this House. My message is this: where was the struggle for the English language? It was not threatened, it was not abused by Māori, by the deaf community, by the sign language community—not at all. So who is disregarding English?

My message to this House is, if we are being true to the principles of the Treaty, we should do this instead: welcome the English language to the official status of languages protected by the English law of this land, but, in my opinion, it should be treated the same as the others. If the Māori language was banned from our schools, we should also ban the English language. Yes? That is equal. Let me turn to English so that I may acknowledge Dr Dean Knight.]

I'll leave it on this: Dr Dean Knight raises an important question, if Parliament genuinely believes English deserves formal, legal recognition, why are we doing this for a stand-alone bill that simply declares English as an official language; why not have the bigger constitutional conversation? He mōumou.

[What a waste.]

TAMATHA PAUL (Green—Wellington Central) (16:35): Āe, he mōumou taima.

[Yes, it's a waste of time.]

We're sitting here debating making English an official language when it's clear that not one person on that side of the House actually picked up a translator during that previous kōrero. How can the House say that they want to elevate a language, that they care so much about a language, when there is no respect for one of our official languages as it stands? I did not see one person picking up their earpiece because there is no respect, because this is just a waste of time.

When I looked at the House programme this week, do you know what we were supposed to be debating right now? We were supposed to be debating a bill that will mean that we can consent

more houses quickly and actually slow down the delay that is happening within our consenting systems for tradesmen, who, by the way, are having the hardest time of all of the industries with tens of thousands of construction workers leaving the industry. We were supposed to be debating that bill, but guess what got railed in between the house deliberating on that bill and what we're doing right now? This complete waste of time.

When I went home last night, my taxi driver asked me, "What were you guys just debating in the House just now?" I said, "Whether the English language should be an official language or not." And he said, "Man, is that really what you guys are talking about in there? We are struggling to pay our bills. We can't afford food. We can't pay our power. People are losing their jobs by the thousands in the city; the inner city is derelict and we're sitting here wondering whether English should be an official language? That is such a pathetic waste of the responsibility of this House to pass legislation that matters."

This does not matter and, actually, I'll say it a lot more frankly, put it in plain language English for you: English is a bastard language. This is what you're fighting to protect as a language that's not even its own. It's a bastardisation of Greek, Old Norse, Latin—it's a complete bastardisation, and this is what we're wasting the House this time fighting for?

Sorry, I know no one wants to say it straight up, but these snowflakes over here—bunch of snowflakes—that hear the word "Aotearoa" and cry themselves to sleep over that.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: No personal attacks, thank you.

TAMATHA PAUL: They cry when they hear the word "Aotearoa"; they stand up on points of order in this House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yeah, I—

TAMATHA PAUL: That's how weak they are. They see te reo Māori and they shiver in their boots. Oh, my gosh!

The Parliament delegation just went to Wales and look at them—they've got their beautiful indigenous language, Cymraeg, everywhere before English. Guess what! The world didn't fall over and the world didn't end. People still knew where they were going, in fact, people saw it and thought, "Wow, we're in a country that values their indigenous language and identity."; unlike our snowflake Government that cannot handle te reo Māori—which is why one of the first orders of business for them was rearranging Aotearoa and New Zealand on the passport, and making sure that we could take te reo Māori out of Government department names. Oh, come on! How divorced from reality can you be that you think switching out te reo Māori is a priority for any New Zealander?

Let me tell you why te reo Māori has a protected language status: because it was beaten out of Māori systematically. We had to March our asses to Parliament, demanding that the indigenous first language of this country be recognised and not beaten out of the mouths of its native speakers.

Just to put it in there, since you didn't want to put the earpieces in and listen to what Oriini put far too eloquently for this House, is that this is a complete and utter waste of time. Do you know what the ironic thing is, too? English isn't even an official language in England—even they know that that's just stupid. It's stupid, and when we were over there in the House of Commons, they definitely weren't wasting their time legislating for that.

This is just a copy-paste of Donald Trump's executive orders, because we know that New Zealand First loves trying to be a wannabe Trump. But it's just a complete and total waste of this House's time, and it is utterly divorced from the harsh realities that people are dealing with, not knowing whether they can survive until next week—but "Oh, at least when we turn Parliament TV on, we can see that our Government and our country's leaders are dealing with the real issues!" So, anyway, I'm glad that we're bringing this complete waste of a bill to an end today so that we never have to speak about it again.

Dr HAMISH CAMPBELL (National—Ilam) (16:40): As I rise in support of the English Language Bill, I do just want to point out to the previous member Tamatha Paul that, actually, we

have screens up here so that we can see the translation. I would also point out that a number of members on this side can actually speak te reo fluently.

The other side hasn't really offered any reasons why English shouldn't be an official language. They claim that this bill is a waste of time, and so if they believe that, actions speak louder than words and they wouldn't take any full calls, which they already have—which has totally wasted the House's time.

Hon Dr DUNCAN WEBB (Labour—Christchurch Central) (16:41): Thank you, Madam Speaker. What a silly day it is—what a silly bill. Tamatha Paul probably needs to speak to Lawrence Xu-Nan, because she called the English language illegitimate and he called it beautiful, but that's just the kind of debate that you get on a meaningless bill like this.

There are bills floating around that deserve real support—I mean, the consent bill that Camilla Belich mentioned, for instance. We're ready to go with it, we all agree with it, and the Justice Committee would be happy to look at it, but, no, we're here talking about the English language. Or, of course, there is the social media ban bill that the National Party members say they want to pass, but instead they're spending parliamentary time on this bill, or there is the deep fakes bill that the ACT Party member wants to put through. That's another bill that we'd be happy to have a close look at, but, no, we're here talking about English being an official language.

I actually quite like this bill for one reason, because I got a parking ticket the other day and it's all in English. With that not being an official language, I'm not going to pay the thing—right? That's the kind of fatuous argument that we could make when we've got a bill that says, "English is [now] an official language"—as if it hasn't always been. It's just silly.

I heard Simon Court say that when he was going down Adelaide Road to the hōhipera to see the tākuta, he was like "Oh, there's a big red cross, but I don't know that it's a hospital." Well, the real question is whether he has the pūtea to pay for a doctor, because most people in New Zealand don't, and that's what we should be talking about here today.

We should be talking about the cost of health and the cost of living crisis that this Government has thrown us into, and instead we're spending all of this parliamentary time talking about the English language and whether it's official or not. Well, I won't waste any more parliamentary time or Government pūtea on it. This is a silly bill, and it shouldn't even be here.

PAULO GARCIA (National—New Lynn) (16:43): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I commend this bill to the House.

DAN ROSEWARNE (Labour) (16:43): We've been consistent throughout this debate. English is already the language used by the overwhelming majority of New Zealanders every day, and it's the language used in our workplaces and our schools, our courts and our businesses, and in most of our interactions here in government.

I just wanted to pick up something that the Minister said in her opening statement. She said that this bill was the bill for the Kiwi battlers. I can just imagine that, being a Kiwi battler, you'd be struggling to pay your bills, and struggling to pay the kids' school camp fees that are coming up—what else—and struggling to fill up the car, to do the supermarket shop, and to pay the pay the doctor's fees. But that's all right because Parliament has passed the English Language Bill today, and that's going to make us feel a lot better.

I won't give this any more time. It's a solution looking for a problem, and that is that. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Greg Fleming.

Tamatha Paul: Do it in te reo—do it in te reo.

GREG FLEMING (National—Maungakiekie) (16:44): He pai tō whakaaro.

[That's a good idea].

Tōku anamata mō Aotearoa, he whenua reo rua *[my vision for New Zealand is for a bilingual nation]*. Nā tēnei pire ka hari mai tērā anamata, nā te mea, āiane *[this bill will deliver that future, as, now]*, in about 15 minutes, we will have two official languages: Māori and English.

Dr Vanessa Weenink: Three.

GREG FLEMING: We'll actually have three, and that will be a wonderful thing. I commend this bill to the House.

GLEN BENNETT (Labour) (16:45): Kia ora, Madam Speaker, and it is yet again an interesting afternoon. What I hear from the members of the Government and from the Minister and from those who have taken calls is that this is all about clarity and certainty. Wow—clarity and certainty. As we look at all the pieces of paper in front of us on the Table there and look at all of our laws that have been written over the last 150 years, they're all written in English, and we need to protect that because we need clarity and certainty.

Well, I think that it's pretty clear that English is a very dominant language, not only here but around the world. It's the most spoken language in the whole world, by far, and I don't think it is under threat or needs to be protected in the way we have been doing it here this afternoon.

As has been said, this bill does seem like a waste of time and a waste of money. I think the culture wars are alive and well, and that is really disappointing, because I think we need to actually be thoughtful lawmakers and people who are trying to make a difference for the betterment of our communities, for the betterment of our workplaces, and for the benefit of everybody. I don't think that this bill does anything towards that or takes us in that direction whatsoever.

Clarity and certainty—I don't think so. I think that English is here to stay and I don't think it's under threat. I just wish that we could solve things like housing and that we could look at jobs and look at fixing the cost of living.

Dr VANESSA WEENINK (National—Banks Peninsula) (16:46): Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the second reading of this bill, I quoted from *The House of God*, where the Fat Man teaches that sometimes the very best medical intervention that you could possibly do is as much of nothing as possible. As I've watched this bill come now to its final phase, I can only conclude that the Fat Man would regard this piece of legislation as an utter masterpiece. English was the principal language of this House before this bill, it will be our principal language after this bill, and the only thing that has really changed is that we've spent several hours speaking in English about it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A party vote was called for on the question, *That the English Language Bill be now read a third time.*

Ayes 101

New Zealand National 48; New Zealand Labour 34; ACT New Zealand 11; New Zealand First 8.

Noes 17

Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand 13; Te Pāti Māori 2; Ferris; Kapa-Kingi.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION SECTOR (STRENGTHENING OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING REGIMES) AMENDMENT BILL

Legislative Statement

Hon CHRIS PENK (Minister for Building and Construction) (16:49): I present a legislative statement on the Building and Construction Sector (Strengthening Occupational Licensing Regimes) Amendment Bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: That legislative statement is published under the authority of the House and can be found on the Parliament website.

Second Reading

Hon CHRIS PENK (Minister for Building and Construction) (16:49): I move, *That the Building and Construction Sector (Strengthening Occupational Licensing Regimes) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.*

I would like to start by thanking the Transport and Infrastructure Committee—including its chairman, Mr Andy Foster—for their careful deliberation on the bill and the recommendations that they have made. I note in passing that this committee has been very busy, including with legislation in the building and construction space, and I thank all members from across the House for their diligent work on this and other bills. Second, I'd like to thank everyone who submitted on the bill at select committee. The submissions resulted in several changes that, in my view, will strengthen and improve the bill. Of course, the purpose of the second reading is to give exposure to some of those changes that have resulted.

Overall, though, I would point out this Government is making building easier and more affordable through changes like granny flats, self-certification for plumbers and drainlayers, and a shift towards proportionate liability. These changes will move assurance away from building consent authorities—from here on, BCAs—and place greater responsibility onto practitioners in the sector. This means that it is more important than ever that building professionals be appropriately held to account promptly if things go wrong. This bill will strengthen complaints and disciplinary mechanisms in the sector and will reinforce expectations of professional conduct and competence, encouraging practitioners to consistently deliver safe, compliant, and high-quality building work first time, every time.

This bill will make changes to three pieces of legislation in order to meet those aims— (1) the Building Act, (2) the Electricity Act, and (3) the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Act—to ensure that the licensing regimes in those Acts are efficient, effective, robust, and sustainable.

This bill will amend the Building Act to further separate the board and registrar functions for complaints made against licensed building practitioners and allow the registrar to dismiss those that are frivolous or vexatious—meaning the complaints, not the practitioners. For all other complaints, the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment—hereafter, MBIE—will appoint an investigator who will investigate a complaint and determine whether or not it warrants a hearing. At present, it can take over a year for a complaint made about a licensed building practitioner to be heard by the board. While this wait goes on, that person can continue working without any restrictions and the complainant is left waiting. This bill is about creating efficiencies and these changes will reduce the time that it takes for complaints by months, as the board's resources will only be used on matters that do truly require their attention.

Currently, it's the case that the registrars of the Electrical Workers Registration Board, and also of the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board, are prohibited from initiating complaints. However, this bill will remove these restrictions. This will enable them to proactively begin investigations when they hear of potential disciplinary offences, or when someone doesn't want to be named in a complaint, such as an employee informing the board of an employer using substandard products or ignoring building consents—what we might refer to colloquially as a whistleblower.

The bill will also amend the membership numbers and quotas for technical and non-technical roles on the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board. The simple change will allow them to operate more efficiently and effectively in performing all their functions. The board handles over 50 complaints every year on a range of different issues. This new membership structure will ensure that there are sufficient consumer and technical perspectives so that it can fairly and effectively consider all the complaints that come before it.

Speaking now on licensed building practitioner, or LBP, licence renewal frequency. The efficiencies in this bill are not just for the Government. By moving licence renewal frequency for LBPs to secondary legislation, the bill will reduce administrative burden on practitioners by aligning them with two-yearly skills maintenance requirements. Less frequent renewals means less time spent in front of a computer doing admin work, and more time out on the tools getting houses built. When an LBP is disciplined and has his or her licence cancelled, their information

is removed from the public register. However, this means that the public has no access to that information. This bill will improve transparency by requiring that these records continue to be displayed on the public register for three years after cancellation, giving consumers greater access to information when choosing who they wish to engage with.

Consumers have a right to expect that the practitioners that they invite into their homes—and I emphasise homes particularly; a person's home is their castle, famously—that they act in an ethical fashion with integrity. To aid this, the bill establishes empowering and disciplinary provisions for codes of ethics to be made by Order in Council for licensed electrical workers and licensed plumbers, gasfitters, and drainlayers. These codes will reinforce consumer expectations around professional conduct and competence from the practitioners they use, and they'll also incentivise practitioners to consistently deliver safe, compliant, and high-quality building work. These codes are not intended to impact practitioners' rights to free speech. What they are intended to do is to ensure that consumers can expect the practitioners they invite into their homes will act in a professional manner and can be held to account if not.

On their own, the changes in this bill might seem minor, but taken together, they make crucial improvements to support the significant changes that the Government is making elsewhere in the sector. These changes promote consistency and efficiency—always worthwhile aims—in complaints processes, giving practitioners clearer obligations, and consumers a more predictable way to hold them accountable.

Before I cover changes made to the bill, again, I'd like to thank the Transport and Infrastructure Committee for their diligent consideration. They've made recommendations to strengthen accountability for practitioners, reduce administrative costs, and improve the workability of the bill overall. These changes were recommended unanimously by the committee and can be found in their report, and I'll only briefly summarise the key changes now, noting that the greater level of detail is contained in that report for the record.

First, the committee noted that penalties for LBPs have not increased since the regime was first introduced in 2007. Where the maximum fine once equated to 3.4 percent of the cost of an average build, today it is only half that. The committee has therefore recommended increasing the maximum fine that can be issued from \$10,000 to \$20,000, and the maximum term of suspension from 12 months to 24 months. This recommendation will act as a stronger deterrent for practitioners by sending a message that misconduct and breaches of responsibility will not be tolerated and will make sure that those found in breach will appropriately be held to account.

Moving quickly through the remaining notes that I have in front of me in the remaining time, the committee's commentary also noted that the clauses covering disciplinary penalties in each Act could be interpreted in a way that matters could be reopened, risking practitioners being disciplined twice for the same matter. To resolve this, the committee has recommended amending the provisions to better clarify situations in which the respective boards may make subsequent orders.

The committee also noted that it is currently difficult to manage competence concerns when a practitioner refuses to participate in a competence review. These reviews will become more important once plumbers and drainlayers are able to self-certify, which is work that we are doing elsewhere. The committee's recommendation is that the board be able to order a person to complete a competence programme if they do not satisfactorily respond to a review.

Next, reducing quorum for the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board. It's a recommendation to reduce the costs of holding these hearings by over \$1,000 a day, reducing that quorum from five members down to three, and this will not impact on the ability of the boards to hold to account any practitioners who appear before them.

Extending good faith liability protection was another area of reform indicated by the committee, whereby they recommended extending this good faith liability protection not just to investigations, or rather investigators of complaints, but rather the people appointed to a system as well.

Finally, I finish with an acknowledgement of the committee again and all those who submitted in suggestions and in support of changes suggested by others. I believe that the changes recommended and accepted by the committee, and in turn accepted by the Government as I'm indicating on its behalf, make the bill a stronger and better piece of legislation. With practitioners

playing a greater role in the building control system, it's important that these processes are strengthened. The committee's recommended amendments will help the bill to achieve its intent of creating complaints and disciplinary processes that are effective, efficient, robust, and sustainable. For all those reasons, I commend this bill to the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: And thank you to the Minister for clarifying all those acronyms for the benefit of myself and the House. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Dr TRACEY McLELLAN (Labour) (16:58): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and that was very thorough, Minister. Labour is happy to support this bill for many of the reasons that the Minister for Building and Construction has just outlined, notwithstanding the fact that it's important that people that do come into our homes and perform work that is crucial to everyday life and specialised and there's expertise involved, that they are well regulated and well supported to do that.

Labour will be supporting this bill. It's about making sure that people carrying out some of the most important and potentially dangerous work in our homes and buildings are properly qualified—I think that that's a fair expectation—and properly regulated. If you're going to put a system in place, you need to make sure that it is properly regulated and held to those very clear professional standards. Certainly, the people that came to the Transport and Infrastructure Committee were very proud of the professions that they were part of, very proud of the trade that they trade on, and wanted themselves to make sure that those were kept at a very high standard.

As we can all imagine, electrical workers, plumbers, gasfitters, drainlayers, licensed builders, practitioners, they all work in environments where poor workmanship can have some really serious consequences and very expensive remediation consequences as well. It's not hard for us to imagine a wiring fault that can cause a fire, a faulty gas work that can put an entire household at risk, and heaven forbid, poor drainage, which can cause long-term damage, which is very expensive and difficult to repair. So it is important that a strong, modern licensing system is in place, and it does matter.

I'm not going to go through the three or four pieces of legislation that this bill will change—I think the Minister did a very thorough job of going through that. Also, to the average person, it sounds quite boring, to be honest, but it's technical, and the gist of it remains in place. It's about making the system better so that both the people working in it and the people benefiting from it have that confidence.

The overall objective, we believe, is sensible. It does create better oversight. We do think that the standards have been made much clearer, including the improvements that were made through the select committee process, once again showing what an important part of this democratic process it is to have good select committees. I also would like to lend my thanks to the Transport and Infrastructure Committee, very ably chaired by Andy Foster, who, no doubt, will be giving a contribution a little bit later on. As the Minister said, at the heart of this it is about consumer confidence, because these aren't just ordinary consumer products. These are trades that are applied more often than not in people's homes, which, as he said, is someone's castle.

There are a couple of things that we did want to highlight, though, the first one being mainly a reiteration of the fact that consumer confidence and quality is incredibly important. It's not just an administrative function, and it's important that it doesn't get implemented or treated like that. It's perfectly reasonable for people to have confidence. Most homeowners certainly aren't in a position to independently assess whether electrical wiring, for instance, has been installed safely. Whilst we can all probably think of many examples of friends, families, members of the public that we interact with who self-diagnose, who think of themselves as being amateur journalists, who read the internet and say that they've done a little bit of research, and goodness knows there's enough bush lawyers around. This is something where the rank amateur can't necessarily do or assess the quality of, so they rely on licensing and they rely on regulation.

For Labour, this fits with our broader view that New Zealand deserves warm, safe, affordable houses that are built to last, that are a priority of society. If we don't keep building and making it possible to build houses that are warm, dry, safe, and built to last, then we soon find ourselves in a bit of a pickle, as we have seen. Higher standards can absolutely help achieve that.

The second thing I wanted to highlight was that stronger powers must also come with some safeguards, which I think is perfectly reasonable. The second issue is that of significant expansion of investigative and enforcement powers. The bill allows regulators to compel, for instance, the production of documents that require statutory declarations and obtain information during complaints and disciplinary investigations. I don't think anybody would think that that was unreasonable, but when they have those new powers, we have to make sure that it is done properly. It provides for entry and inspection powers in certain circumstances, so I think that that is perfectly reasonable. There's a legitimate reason for those powers, and we acknowledge that, and the regulators need to be able to investigate serious allegations and act before any type of unsafe practice, not just retrospectively unsafe work but any kind of hint that unsafe work could lead to unsafe practice in the future, because that's a harm reduction measure, and that makes sense to us as well.

The select committee has needed to test whether the requirements around consent, notice, warrants, privacy, and the use of information are sufficiently robust. There must also be a clear review of what should always be rights to appeal. Appeal rights are an important part of any process.

The third thing I just wanted to highlight was the costs and resourcing. So we also may be a little bit concerned about the potential costs of the new system, not in a statutory sort of kind of way, but the bill modernises levy-setting powers, and the Government has not really provided enough analysis on the likely effect on licence fees on small operators and homeowners. Obviously, a levy placed on a tradesperson doesn't simply disappear; it may be absorbed by the worker, it may be passed on through a business or ultimately added to the price by the person building or repairing a home. So it's important that that costing and that resourcing is well known and the system is fit for purpose. It doesn't mean that reasonable licensing costs are unjustified, obviously; it means that those costs absolutely need to be transparent, they need to be proportionate, and they need to be clearly connected to an effective regulatory service, and that should be obvious. Practitioners should also themselves be able to see what they're paying for.

So Labour is going to support this bill because it's clearer and it provides a more consistent licensing system. We were pleased with the process. We think the select committee and all of the submitters did a really good job of making sure that not only technical but all the information painted a really robust picture of what needed to be done, and we were satisfied with some of the changes that were made and the direction of this bill. We support complaints processes that give consumers confidence and treat competent tradespeople fairly. I think we saw that again through the select committee process, where it was the tradespeople themselves that were really, really invested in making sure that the standards were high.

Labour's focus, obviously, is on protecting consumers, supporting skilled tradespeople, and ensuring that stronger standards produce safer, quality homes without shifting any unnecessary costs further down the chain to the consumer, but we're happy to support this bill.

Hon JULIE ANNE GENTER (Green—Rongotai) (17:07): Tēnā koe, Madam Speaker. This is very unusual in that it's a bill that's come to the House that we actually support and very few people submitted on. For this term of Government, that is incredibly unusual. We've had record numbers of submissions, highly polarising laws rushed through by this Government, but for once they're doing something that's actually useful. So I congratulate Minister Penk on this part of the bill.

I'm sure that select committee chair, Andy Foster, will speak very eloquently about the select committee process. Unfortunately, for most of this bill, I wasn't on the Transport and Infrastructure Committee, as I usually am, because I had to be on the Environment Committee for the planning and environment bills, which, by the way, were overwhelmingly opposed by the submitters and just being rushed through by this very careless and irresponsible Government for the most part.

Simon Court: Rushed through? Three years.

Hon JULIE ANNE GENTER: I'd be interested to hear Mr Court's contribution on this bill.

Anyway, there were only 15 submissions on this bill—not very many. The previous speakers have outlined what the point of it is, and I think it's good. Our tradespeople have an incredibly important role to play. Consumers have every right to be assured that there's a fair process when things

don't go well. Since we're shifting away from the system of oversight—which has not been great, I'll be honest—that we have had, it's really important that we beef up the process around investigations, complaints, disciplinary measures. We also have a whole lot we could be doing to lift the standards of building in this country, particularly with the challenges we're facing: the need to rapidly electrify everything, to harness wind and particularly the solar energy that we could be harnessing in our households, switching to electric devices, electric cars, electric hot water heat pumps. Things like that are going to require a whole lot of upskilling and new skills and new opportunities for people working as electricians.

As plumbers—the need to get off gas. We need to urgently get off gas for our households, because it's going to be extremely expensive, not to mention it's very bad for people's health. I don't know if people realise that we have higher rates of asthma in this country and there's been some really interesting research recently that demonstrates—

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Maureen Pugh): As it relates to this bill.

Hon JULIE ANNE GENTER: Yeah, well, getting off gas is going to require a whole lot of tradespeople to do retrofits in people's homes. Like, here in Wellington, I think about a third of our households are using gas for cooking or hot water heating or heating the house, and it's super expensive; it's totally unsustainable; it has huge, harmful health consequences for the people living in those houses and they're going to be paying through the nose to do it. But with the shift to electric appliances, we also need to switch to far more efficient electric appliances because our grid won't be able to handle all those household domestic gas users switching to, like, an electric hot water heater, but a hot water heat pump is an opportunity to use way less energy to have great hot water. So there's win-win-win-win-win, but we need to have Government leadership and support for this transition.

Now, we don't fully agree with the other side of this proposal, which is the self-certification, but we are very happy to support this bill. As I said, I don't want to take up a lot of time, because I'd rather it just pass second reading. We've already been waiting several months. I think it was reported back by the select committee four months ago, and yet it hasn't come to the House for second reading. Why are all these, like, useless, controversial, polarising bills coming to the House through urgency and extended hours, but, for some reason, the sensible thing the Government's trying to do gets delayed and delayed and delayed? That's probably because of the disproportionate influence of the two support parties wanting to get through their vice-signalling decks of legislation, like—

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Maureen Pugh): Back to the bill.

Hon JULIE ANNE GENTER: —the English Language Act, which just passed a few minutes ago.

So, yeah, we love our tradies. There is a huge amount of work for our tradies. We think that everyone in New Zealand will benefit from having a more robust and better process to make sure that people are protected when things go wrong and they have a good oversight over practitioners, and those practitioners also need to be provided with additional training to be able to do the enormous mahi that's in front of us when it comes to electrification; getting rid of fossil fuels in our homes; building more warm, dry, energy-efficient homes; switching to great things like hot water heat pumps. Can't wait to see it. Hopefully, under our next Green Government, we'll have a lot more Government support for that sort of thing.

SIMON COURT (ACT) (17:12): ACT supports this bill because it's about cutting red tape and aligning the needs of consumers—particularly those wanting electrical services, plumbing and drainlaying, and building services—with their needs. For too long, we've had an archaic way of regulating these trades, and the regulatory bodies responsible for the trades have not been able to effectively impose sanctions and controls and require additional training and performance improvement from some of those tradies at the margins who do not meet the standards. So ACT supports this bill because it strengthens the compliance and enforcement side of building and other trade regulations in order to provide confidence to consumers that the people coming into their homes and businesses are competent, going to do good work, and they're going to get value for money.

There was something else that came up, though. There are a group of people in New Zealand who want to insist that not just tradies but professional people too have to comply with a code of ethics. Now, as a former civil engineer—and potentially I'll go back to it one day, if I'm ever released from this democratic prison that we're confined to—this is the problem: some people's version of ethics is actually "wokery". Tradies, plumbers, gasfitters, builders, and electricians do not want to be told how to think by the high priests of diversity, equity, and inclusion and environmental, social, and governance on some kind of professional board.

Some of us, as the report says—in fact, that was the ACT committee member, and, potentially, Andy Foster, the committee chair—consider that codes of ethics should be confined to professional practice matters and trade practice and should not creep into subjective matters, such as political views. Some of us consider this is especially true for contested political matters, and we do not consider that these should be reflected in a code of ethics.

Now, while we are pleased that this has been reported back to the House for this important commentary, there is one further step that ACT would take, and, in fact, Todd Stephenson, ACT MP, has proposed a member's bill which would confine professional and other bodies only to regulating trade practices and competency and exclude these contested political matters from being able to be considered.

I don't know if any of you have ever worked on a building site—I mean, I worked on a landfill for six years. Some of the opinions that are offered by the bulldozer drivers and the digger drivers around various matters, like, they're not repeatable. I wouldn't take them home and report to my wife what was said in the lunchroom.

Hon Mike Butterick: Free and frank—free and frank.

SIMON COURT: Very free and frank, Mr Butterick, that's right. But, again, they are not matters that should be regulated by a professional body or a trades-regulating body. On that basis, ACT commends this bill to the House.

ANDY FOSTER (NZ First) (17:16): I rise as chair of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee, which considered this bill, and also on behalf of New Zealand First. I just want to start off by saying thank you to all the people who were involved in it. Thank you to the Minister for the generous comments at the beginning. Thank you to all the submitters. I did particularly want to say that this must be "Tradies Recognition Day". It's lovely to hear the Green Party with their support for the tradies, which, I assume, will also extend to their support for the tradies' chosen vehicles, which, I hope, they will back in future. Tradies always love their utes. Thanks to the submitters. But I really did want to say thank you to all the tradies who are out there doing fantastic work for us up and down the country, and this bill is for them. Also, just thank you to the committee for, as always, the collaborative way in which we worked through this legislation and improved it and reported it back.

This bill is part of the drive by this Government to reduce the cost of building. That is, basically, it takes away some of the council, sort of, regulation, and we've got more ability now to be able to self-regulate. The people who have got the professional skills are being trusted to self-regulate. This bill sits behind that, which says, "You can self-certify, but, if you don't do the job properly, we've got to have some way of being able to investigate, to make sure that people are up to spec." That's what this bill is all about. It's about giving confidence to people that the practitioners are able to do the job that they're trying to do and that they're confident to do it.

It makes the licensing regime more robust. It empowers the registrar to instigate investigations, to enforce training orders, to do competency reviews, and also to provide penalties as well. So it gives a greater degree of enforcement. That's all about giving people confidence in the system as a whole.

There are two other things that I just wanted to say very, very briefly. One of them is that there is a gap which I didn't identify—or was identified, actually, by our leader—which is that there are some people who occasionally will pass themselves off as something that they are not. They say, "Well, I'm a licensed gasfitter, drainlayer, plumber, electrician, builder", or whatever it might be, and they're not. We don't appear, it seems, to have a regime to say, "Well, actually, that is a problem, that should be an offence, and there should be a penalty for that." That's something I've

taken up with the Minister, and we will continue to pursue that, because that, of course, is very important.

I just want to finish off, also, just by talking briefly about the issue that Simon Court was talking about just a moment ago, which is the code of ethics. What we're talking about there is that the code of ethics should be about knowing, when somebody comes into your home, somebody comes and does some work for you, that they are competent; that if they say they are a licensed practitioner, they are a licensed practitioner; that they act with integrity and honesty in your home; that they do the pricing and all that sort of thing properly; that you can trust them.

This is the area which ACT and New Zealand First said very strongly—we would have loved to have the National Party on board on this one, our dearly beloved friends there. They didn't want to support us on this. It's not about what sort of political views, or whatever else it might be, that you have. I don't think we've seen stories about that in these particular industries. We have in other industries, where people have been told, "You must go through a training process"—and we particularly think of the real estate agents—"on something which doesn't look as though it's related at all to the industry which you're in, and if you don't do that, then you will lose your practising licence."

That's the kind of thing that New Zealand First are really concerned about. That is why we have that part in the report back from the committee—that's why it's there. It's something which we do think needs to be addressed, because if we get more stories about that, that becomes a real problem—it becomes a problem for confidence in industries but it also becomes a problem for the confidence of those practitioners that they continue to practise what they have trained hard for, the work that they do with diligence, and yet they're being told they need to do something else which is not relevant to their jobs.

With that, I want to thank again everybody who was involved in that, this piece of legislation, and commend it to the House.

TAMATHA PAUL (Green—Wellington Central) (17:20): Kia ora, Madam Speaker. Happy to rise to speak in support of this bill. As a partner of an electrician, I know this bill isn't about electricians, but very aware of the lifestyle that they live and the work environments that they work in. He is an electrician, so will have lots of work helping to electrify our country.

Anyway, last week, when I was at the airport, I just happened to meet this young women, and she's a plumber. She's actually a qualified plumber, she's a qualified gasfitter, and a qualified "drainslayer", as she likes to call it, but she's a drainlayer. Her name's Hera, and her name on Instagram is "shes_a_maori_plumber_". I actually messaged her this morning when I saw the House programme and said, "Hey, what do you think about this bill?" I thought it might be helpful to read some of the comments from someone who will be affected by this. She said, "Currently, us gasfitters already self-certify our work. It's been like that for a very long time. However, once this bill passes and us plumbers and drainlayers can start certifying our own work, all it really means is this: we don't need some—I'm going to say "person", but she used another word—"[person] coming in and telling us how to do our job, what we've done wrong or right. We've done an apprenticeship for six years, continuously upskilling ourselves, and on the tools daily. We know what we are doing. Council will still get all the information that they need from us, so fewer council inspections and delays on jobs waiting to finish, meaning productivity is improved and costs are reduced. So, essentially, as a plumber, less time waiting for inspections, more control over my workflow, and the opportunity to deliver jobs to clients more efficiently once we're endorsed." So, hey, that's a nice way to summarise it right from the mouth of the horse—is that right?

Lemauga Lydia Sosene: Horse's mouth.

TAMATHA PAUL: Horse of the mouth—whatever it is.

Glen Bennett: Plain English!

TAMATHA PAUL: Good to hear from someone who—oh, there's English; so confusing. Glad it's official now!

So I think that's a really good endorsement of this bill from someone who will be impacted by it. But the reason I met her, actually, is because she was coming back from the National Association

of Women in Construction conference that was held here in Wellington recently. That also peaked my interest, because I am very passionate about increasing the number of women in trades.

One of the things that this bill does is it enables a code of ethics. My colleague over there, a prior civil engineer, Simon Court made a comment around diversity, equity, and inclusion. I'm not sure how serious he was about those comments, but I do think it is pretty serious that only 15.8 percent of the construction industry are women. Actually, under 3 percent of the construction industry are actually women who are on the tools. I think that's a problem, because if you look at the wider workforce in New Zealand, half of our workforce is obviously women, but then when you look into construction and trades, which is where you are really seeing an issue.

I am really lucky because, here in Wellington, we've got a really awesome advocacy group called Cahoots. They've got a workshop here in Mount Cook where people can join for \$1 a week and have access to all of their tools and a workshop to practise their skills and their trade. But they also do a lot of advocacy about how we can improve the numbers of women and gender minorities within the trades. One of the things that they found when they conducted a study of male tradies is one of those tradies commented that the trades culture is blunt and rough and a "final frontier" lagging behind broader social norms.

I think that is really important that we consider code of ethics as an important thing, because if only 3 percent of workers in the construction industry are women, that is really, really concerning, especially when we look at the infrastructure requirements of our country over the next few generations. We need as many people as possible working in the trades. So we really need to have a look at this and the workplace culture and safety and treat gender equity within construction as a workplace health and safety issue—just like personal protective equipment, just like every other aspect of health and safety while on the site.

The last thing I'll say, just on women in trades, is one thing my partner always says about women tradies on site is that they are the hardest-working person on site. But I think the point of having a code of ethics is that they shouldn't have to be the hardest-working person on site because they are a woman.

Dr CARLOS CHEUNG (National—Mt Roskill) (17:25): Well, this Government has been cutting red tape to make it easier and faster to build, while ensuring consumers are protected. This legislation strengthens accountability by ensuring licensed building professionals can be held to account through a robust complaints process. We are here, not only about building more houses; we are about fixing the basics and building the future. I commend this bill to the House.

REUBEN DAVIDSON (Labour—Christchurch East) (17:25): If I had a tradie that spent only that long in my house, I'd be very, very concerned. I'd suggest that they wouldn't be taking the job seriously—that they wouldn't be examining it sufficiently to be able to provide me with the certainty I'd need, that their quote was efficient, and actually had taken into account all of the factors that one should take into account when they prepare a quote. That speech was just so fast—I'm still recovering. But it does give me the opportunity to take to my feet [*Interruption*] and—despite the noise, which I think is supportive from the other side of the House—take a call on this, the Building and Construction Sector (Strengthening Occupational Licensing Regimes) Amendment Bill.

Despite the protestations from the other side of the House, I am standing to take this call in support of this bill, because I believe—as do members on this side of the House—that New Zealanders deserve warm, dry, safe homes. Ultimately, the intention of this bill, I believe, is to be able to create warm, dry, safe homes for New Zealanders.

Now, I want to start with just a shout-out to tradies across New Zealand. This is because I know how hard they work, I know the amazing work that they do to make sure that we've got good, warm, dry, safe homes, but also because previously when I've taken a call on this bill in the House, I actually told a story about a gasfitter that drilled through the water waste pipe in my kitchen and caused a leak inside an internal wall.

So I think it's time that I redeem that story and the honour of tradies nationwide by sharing the story about the electrician who one day when I was sitting in my house and a noise came out of the fuse box that sounded like the rustling of cellophane or foil—it was not the noise that you want to hear from your electrical mains box—and I rang my electrician and I said to him, "This is the

noise that's coming out of the mains box inside my house." I made the noise of the crackling sound down the phone. I won't do it here, but I did it down the phone. He said to me, "Touch nothing. I'm on the way." This was at the weekend, and he was at my house within about 15 minutes. He repaired the wiring in my house at the time. He said to me, "I don't know how your house hasn't burnt down." He couldn't believe that that was the noise that had come out of my meter box.

When, eventually, that house—which, unfortunately, had to be demolished after the earthquake—was demolished, the steel pipe conduit within the walls and ceilings of that house that carried the electrical wiring was probably stronger than the framing and joists that had held that house up for 100 or so years. So a big shout-out to that sparkie, to that electrician who stepped in and saved the day—made sure my house didn't burn down—and to tradies and sparkies everywhere across New Zealand who work so hard to make sure that we have warm, dry, safe houses.

But back to the bill, because, ultimately, this is a bill that serves those people. I think it's important for us to remember that other members of this House worked really constructively at the Transport and Infrastructure Committee to make sure that what we've got is a bill that does the things it sets out to do. They are, as an omnibus bill: amending the Building Act 2004, the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Act 2006, and reaching way back into the past—something this Government seems intent to do with a lot of its policy direction—the Electricity Act 1992. It's also about strengthening occupational licensing regimes by updating governance administration licensing complaints and disciplinary systems across three major regulated trades—that's really important too. Part of that, too, though, and in handing some of that responsibility over, is that it also needs to give investigators and inspectors clearer powers to obtain the information that they may need when they're looking at self-regulated or self-signed-off activities and construction activities.

It also modernises the levy-setting powers across the licensing boards and it introduces the new entry, inspection, and information-gathering powers to support the investigations, including allowing people to have access to the properties where that work is carried out, subject to appropriate safeguards. So there's a whole lot to consider. It's not as simple as saying, "Oh, we'll self-certify it—all will be fine."; there are a whole lot of additional considerations that the Transport and Infrastructure Committee had to take into account when they were looking at this and progressing this bill through the select committee process.

They also create several new strict liability offences relating to working without proper licences and failing to comply with notices, summons, or information requests. That could be a tool we could introduce in the House for when a speech—unlike mine—is delivered far too short. It may be something that the Speaker could have an enforcement mechanism there to say, "Speak a little longer. This is a bill of value and we need a substantive contribution from either side of the House."

What this aims to do, finally—not finally in my speech, but finally in what the bill aims to do—is create consistency across building-related professions and improve the quality, safety, and oversight of regulated construction work. So a very, very good aim; very good intent. I think that's why you've seen broad support from across the House for that.

But there is a risk, and the risk is risk, because what we're seeing with this bill is the shifting of risk. So when you look at the potential to shift risk, you need to really carefully consider that you still have the appropriate protections in place, ultimately, in this instance, for consumers. You need to have a protection in place for the homeowner, or the person building the home or having the work carried out within their home, to ensure that they are not being placed at risk by something that is going to fall foul further down the track or something that is not going to be compliant and is going to cause either a malfunction in their home or potentially an injury or serious injury. When you're talking about things like electricity and gas and structural components of your home, I think that's something that you need to be very conscious of the risks of shifting risk.

So, I guess, if people wanted an example of shifting risk, it would be potentially something like a leader of a political party that promises to fix the cost of living and then can't answer basic questions in the House about whether, actually, lowering the cost of living is a good idea or not. That could be someone who has shifted the risk, made some big promises, and then failed to deliver, and then claimed that he never intended to do those things in the first place. That sounds

like shifting risk. I've heard it called quite a few other things too, but given that it's a Thursday and given that I'm in the House, I really don't want to resort to that kind of language.

Hon Dr Duncan Webb: Go on—throw it out!

REUBEN DAVIDSON: Look, I'm being asked to throw it out—by my colleague here, I'm being asked to throw it out—I fear if I did throw it out, that it would in fact be me that was thrown out of this House for using that language. So I won't go there, but I will just warn people that shifting risk is something that you should certainly look out for at this time of year, particularly when you're listening to such quality speeches as this one delivered in the House on a Thursday afternoon.

Ultimately, what I do need to come back to is the bill. As I said at the beginning of this speech, prior to having to cover so much important material around the content and substantive inclusions within the bill, we do support this bill. We've heard from some other contributions, too, some specific shout-outs to people working in the trades, and particularly some observations around the lower levels, potentially, of women working in the trades.

So I want to take this opportunity to give a shout-out to some of the students that I met at Haeata Community Campus earlier this week, who are actually—whilst they're at high school—also completing trades training, and are really, really excited about how they can contribute to New Zealand and New Zealanders through working in the construction sector, and particularly a couple of young women who were part of a conversation we had at Haeata Community Campus who are studying two days a week at the Ara campus just down the road there in the great electorate of Banks Peninsula, and are doing their plastering training, so that they will be able to be part of, hopefully, the construction boom that we might see if a Government of the future decides to build the houses that we desperately need to tackle the homelessness issues that we have across Aotearoa. But, ultimately, Mr Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to explore this bill and a couple of other things, and we do, on this side of the House, support it.

TIM COSTLEY (National—Ōtaki) (17:35): My goodness! If I had a tradie like that turn up in my house, waffle on, get nothing done—the only bill he seemed focused on was what he paid for his dodgy wiring in his house. There couldn't be a better metaphor for him and the Labour Party needing to get their own house in order before they start criticising someone else. For him to criticise the great MP for Mount Roskill, Dr Carlos Cheung, for the way he speaks—I know the motivation behind it, I don't like it, I think it's poor. I would contrast it with the Minister for Building and Construction, who has spent three years fixing the basics; now he has a bill that builds the future. I commend it.

LEMAUGA LYDIA SOSENE (Labour—Māngere) (17:36): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to take a call on this bill. I'm really happy to take the call and know that Labour will be supporting the bill. I do want to thank the Transport and Infrastructure Committee members—I don't sit on that select committee, but I have had the opportunity in the past and really appreciate it—and also the submitters that did submit on the bill.

We've heard what the bill does. I want to spend quite a bit of my time with the tradies and I want to thank the tradies. In Māngere, we have, at the Auckland International Airport, the Ara skills hub. What this bill does will help make it very clear what those tradies, electrical workers, plumbers, gasfitters, drainlayers, in high-risk environments—and so to be competent, to be clearly competent.

I just want to reflect, also, on a couple of examples where I've been a project manager with no skills, other than being a property owner, in terms of identifying what the standards must be. One of the things that I've really appreciated about this bill is the clear competence and the consistency and enforcement and also the modernising of complaint systems.

When you're a homeowner and you're shopping around for good tradies and you don't understand the system, it is really important that the principles and the standards that are provided—as a homeowner in South Auckland, it's really important that you understand what a tradie brings into your home, because a lot of people in my area recommend tradies.

What this bill does, what Labour supports, is that New Zealanders deserves homes that are affordable, that are built to last, and that stronger licensing will help lift that quality, because it is fair, proportionate, and really improves the safety of homeowners and consumers, and with the

bill introducing broader investigative and disciplinary tools, that will be transparent and balanced, and not punitive for small operators.

I just wanted to reflect my comments in appreciation of one of the providers in our area, called the Ara skills hub. It is really helpful to have young people in South Auckland, particularly of different diverse backgrounds, be attracted to becoming a qualified tradie and also be able to lift their games in terms of this licensing tool.

I am concerned, though, with regards to new levies and compliance costs which will be passed to workers and homeowners. People really need to understand that if you're going to modify your home, (a) you understand the world of tradies; and (b) that you've got a licensing system that is available through legislation to help you identify those risks.

It is important that Labour's focus is about protecting consumers and supporting competent tradespeople. I keep going back to the examples in my area because some of our young people have left school without the skills, in terms of academia, but they have turned to the trades to be able to have a career in that area.

What the bill does: we've heard that it amends the Building Act for plumbers, gasfitters, drainlayers, and the Electricity Act 1992. It's really important that this legislation strengthens those occupational licensing regimes by updating governance and administration, and especially, too, the licensing component, because for some of our young people English is their second language and when they go into a trade—it's to understand all the rules; that when you're going to go and modify people's homes, you've actually got all those components to do that work.

Finally, I was just receiving some texts as to why the tradies are important in all the different building projects. I wanted to reflect that in Mangere, we've had a lot of building projects where some of the tradies, unfortunately, have been cowboys, so it's going to be very important to get this legislation through. So I'm really pleased to speak on this. I commend this bill to the House.

RIMA NAKHLE (National—Takanini) (17:40): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is indeed a pressing need to strip back the layers upon layers of regulation, which have been blocking real progress in our building industry, and this bill is a great tool for productivity in building and construction. Shout out to Ostle Electoral and Swift Fix Plumbing, who they do a lot of great work in Takanini. I commend this bill to the House.

Hon Dr DUNCAN WEBB (Labour—Christchurch Central) (17:41): Kia ora e te Mana Whakawā. Thank you for giving me the call. It's quite interesting to hear Reuben Davidson's shout-out to his electrician for saving him from a house fire. Quite some years ago now, I had some electrical work done on a hot water cylinder. The element that heats the water was replaced. Then, as I went to bed one night, there was a strange smell—actually, kind of an ozone-y smell—but I didn't think much of it. I was woken at about midnight by my cat scratching at the door and smoke coming under it. So my house did actually burn down—ha!—and I was in it at the time, and I can tell you, on a June night, leaving your house in your underpants and sitting on the front lawn until the fire service gives you a blanket is actually quite cold. No lives were lost—although it was a house full of flats as well, and so it was a classic fire risk—but it was actually quite a frightening experience to sit on the front lawn and watch the flames leap from the roof of your house, and is something I don't recommend. But it was a pretty simple mistake. It was a competence error. The element that was put in drew too much power for the 1920s Bakelite switch, and the Bakelite switch melted and, basically, burst into flames from the heat of the electrical load—a classic competence question. Whilst there has long been regulations and that clearly did not comply, it is good to see that we're updating and keeping modern our regulations around all of these trades.

I think that making sure that the machinery of industry regulation works is really important, and input from the profession itself is also important. It's good to see that there's flexibility around having members of the industry, the experts in the area, having input into it. I can't not say a little bit about the code of ethics issue because this is actually a matter which I hold dear to my heart. Codes of ethics do a whole lot of things. Obviously, competence is part of it. Trade practices and integrity is part of it as well, but increasingly, the code of ethics across various businesses and industries have done a bit more.

My colleague Lemauga Lydia Sosene made a comment which I thought was worth repeating, and that is that you want a diverse workforce as well. The comments from some on the other side around code of ethics, I think warrant further examination. If you've got someone coming into your house and doing work, being in your personal space, you want to feel safe in every respect. Also, you want your employees to feel safe in every respect. One of the things, certainly in the legal profession, that has found its way into its code of ethics is standards around workplace bullying and harassment. Not only is a lawyer liable in an employment, should they, for example, bully their employee or sexually harass their employee, but it also reflects on their fitness to practise law. Now, if we want more, for example, women or Pasifika tradies, then we need to make sure that their workplaces are safe.

I have no difficulty whatsoever with saying that an operator—a principal or owner of a trades business—needs to act in a way that is respectful and aware. There's a whole lot of chatter about the real estate agent case. For those who might not be aware, it's a case where a real estate agent refused to do a course on tikanga. The rules were a bit clumsy—and they've since been fixed by Parliament, but the rules were clumsy and said, "If you don't do the course, you'll lose your practice certificate." Now, that was blunt, but the idea that someone who's going to be dealing with all members of society in his or her trade needs to be aware and not a cultural moron—I'm fine with that. So I have no difficulty if we have codes of ethics which require people to be ethical and responsible, not engage in bullying, not engage in sexual harassment or other misconduct of that nature, and be competent and honest—I'm OK with it because I think it builds a stronger profession. So, the comments of one member of the House that—you know, there were comments; he didn't say exactly what they were, but comments that he wouldn't repeat to his wife, which suggests they were perhaps sexist or racist. Well, I actually don't think there's a place for that in a trade. If he was talking about people who were supposed to be respectable tradespeople, please call it out. Let's say that that's not the kind of environment that we want to create.

So codes of ethics have an important part to play—and I do think this is another important thing about codes of ethics: that them coming from industry is a good thing. The provisions in this piece of legislation which are enabling of those codes of ethics—essentially, the industry develops them, and then they will go through the ministerial office for approval by the Governor-General, which is, of course, a formality once it's gone through the Minister's office. I think it's a good process. It makes sure that they align with what the industry needs because that's where they're sourced, but it also makes sure that there's some oversight of the content of that code.

So, look, it's good, this bill. Again, as was noted, if we're going to build warmer, safer homes, that's really good—and keep them warm and safe by repairs and renovations and what have you—that's good. The Labour Party is very much on the side of warm, safe, and affordable homes. There is an outstanding question because this Government is wont to increase the costs on New Zealanders, surreptitiously, by increasing fees and levies. That's happened across the board. With one hand, it says don't increase your rates; with the other hand, it puts up your registration fees and your ACC levies and all kinds of other levies across the board. And here again, there are new levies and there hasn't been a lot of work done around whether this will increase costs for, fundamentally, homeowners, and I think that always deserves careful scrutiny. Any levy, of course, needs to be, essentially, cost recovery and appropriate. So I think it would be appropriate, when those levies are imposed, to make sure that, across the period—which is usually around a three-year period because there's ups and downs across that—they no more than recover costs.

Of course, the other thing—the member of the ACT Party sort of said that this is cutting red tape; in fact, there's a whole lot of powers here that are given, which are good because you do want to have the power to intervene when it's appropriate, including the power to demand information. There are additional powers for investigation and discipline, because it's no good having a body which is given responsibility for the proper management of a profession and then not giving it any teeth to do that with. The ability to impose pretty significant fines, is good. I do think, in the disciplinary space, you need to be careful imposing fines and other disciplinary measures.

Of course, alongside those are education orders—or "training orders" I think they are called in this piece of legislation—and I think that's good as well because if you think of the outcome you're after, it's not punitive, it's more protective. So if you've got a tradie, a gasfitter, who's made a

mistake, and you're not going to strike them off, they're still going to be a gasfitter, it's better to say, "Go and upskill and get it right and pass the certification to show that you've learnt this method.", or whatever it might be; then simply saying, "That was bad, pay \$5,000 in a fine.", because a fine is punitive only. That's actually a shift across professions, generally, to say, "Look, we're actually after proper competence and it's not a punitive framework; it's protective for the public and that should be our focus." So that's why we think this is a pretty good piece of legislation.

SUZE REDMAYNE (National—Rangitikei) (17:51): We are hammering away at our ambitious programme of reforms.

Tim Costley: Oh, you've nailed it. You've nailed it already.

SUZE REDMAYNE: I did nail it. We're stripping back regulations and we're getting on with the job.

I want to take this opportunity to thank a very special business in my electorate, Homestead Construction in Levin—a great business. They've just celebrated their 50th birthday. Reuben, Jason, and Daniel Lawry and Stephen Griffiths—congratulations and thank you.

GLEN BENNETT (Labour) (17:51): Kia ora, Mr Speaker. It is good to celebrate businesses in our communities and those who are doing the hard work. In this piece of legislation, we do support it, as has been said, and I think that part of that is around—we talk about small and medium enterprises in terms of how they are the engine room of our economy and of our communities—I think it's around 97 percent are small and medium enterprises, which, obviously, are our tradies, our sole traders, those who are doing things like doing work in people like Reuben Davidson's or Duncan Webb's homes, and making sure that they are fit and proper to live in.

I was thinking, as I was looking at one part of this legislation, which was around the introducing new entry and inspection information-gathering powers to support investigations, including, you know, the paperwork and access to that type of thing. I thought about it because I've spent a lot of time, back in the day, in the hospitality sector and it's just a given. If you sort of look at the different sectors and the different kind of industries and the standards they have or just what's always been, and so I think having access to that paperwork and information is just a given. Coming from hospitality, where when you have your hygiene and your food licence, that type of thing, I mean, it's just a given that you have the council inspectors who have access to all of that paperwork to make sure they know what is going on, and to make sure that when it comes to food and food safety, obviously, they can see everything that is in place to make sure that the customer has the experience they should have, shouldn't get sick, shouldn't have any kind of infection or cross-contamination. So when I look at this legislation and looking at the building and construction sector, it just, to me, makes sense the fact that there is this ability to introduce the entry and inspection information-gathering powers.

It is Thursday afternoon and I know that it probably is almost time for us to depart, but it is nice to listen across the floor and have consensus on something that looks simple and just legislation that actually can make sense. There's been a few submissions where we've come to a place where we can say, "Yes, the Building and Construction Sector (Strengthening Occupational Licensing Regimes) Amendment Bill is something we can all agree to." Labour, on this side of the House, commends it to passing.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

COMMERCE (PROMOTING COMPETITION AND OTHER MATTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

Legislative Statement

Hon CAMERON BREWER (Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs) (17:55): I present a legislative statement on the Commerce (Promoting Competition and Other Matters) Amendment Bill.

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Greg O'Connor): That legislative statement is published under the authority of the House and can be found on the Parliament website.

Second Reading

Hon CAMERON BREWER (Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs) (17:55): I move, *That the Commerce (Promoting Competition and Other Matters) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.*

This bill forms a key part of the Government's commitment to improving competition in New Zealand. Strong competition is essential to lifting New Zealand's economic growth and productivity. Competitive markets encourage businesses to innovate, invest, and improve efficiency, which in turn enables better prices, greater services, and more choice for consumers.

I would like to thank the Economic Development, Science and Innovation Committee for its consideration of the bill. This bill makes key changes to modernise our competition settings by making it easier for businesses to collaborate when it benefits consumers, strengthening the merger regime to more effectively and efficiently prevent harmful market concentration, allowing the High Court to issue corrective action orders if a company breaches the Act, and improving the protection of confidential information provided to the Commerce Commission.

Submissions to the committee highlighted both the importance of the reform package and diverging views on competition reform. Many supported the bill's direction but differ on the degree of intervention, the extent of the commission's discretion, and the balance between certainty for firms and strong responses to market concentration and exclusionary conduct. The bill is stronger for that scrutiny. Following the select committee process, changes have been made to respond to the issues raised by submitters and to strike a better balance between strong competition enforcement and a regime that is workable for business. These changes improve clarity, support greater certainty, and better align with aspects of the bill with trans-Tasman competition settings. The core objective remains unchanged: to promote competitive markets for the benefit of consumers and the wider economy, while ensuring the tools and the bill are practical, proportionate, and fit for purpose.

I'd like to draw the House's attention to a few changes made by the select committee as a result of the submissions received. The bill strengthens the voluntary merger notification regime. The committee has recommended that the clarified substantial lessening of competition test apply to the merger regime only, rather than the entire Act. This reflects the Government's intent to address killer acquisitions that remove new innovative competitors from the market before they can challenge incumbents. The creeping acquisitions provision has been refined so the three-year look back applies only to prior acquisitions involving small goods or services.

The bill as introduced would also have given the commission a new power to study markets and require new information to assess whether pro-competition regulation may be justified. Submitters considered this too onerous and duplicative of the commission's existing market study powers; these provisions have therefore been removed. Instead, the bill now relies on the existing market study framework with a targeted amendment making clear that the commission may recommend pro-competition, recommend regulation and reforms to reduce regulatory barriers to competition.

The bill establishes a new statutory notification regime for businesses to seek the equivalent of an authorisation from the commission for conduct—

Hon Dr Duncan Webb: Don't rush. You're doing OK.

Hon CAMERON BREWER: Are you liking this, Duncan? I can talk slower—that is unlikely to harm competition and may deliver public benefits. Initially, limit to collective bargaining and resale price maintenance, submitters broadly support this new regime. The bill has been refined to improve certainty and usability, including that by clarifying the criteria and the process.

The bill also strengthens the enforcement tool kit through corrective action orders. This will allow the High Court to require practical steps to remedy, mitigate, or avoid the effects of a breach. Importantly, the bill has been amended so private parties, as well as the Commerce Commission, can apply for these orders, ensuring the remedy is more accessible. The bill updates the Act's confidentiality framework to give the commission greater ability to protect confidential information

obtained through investigations, inquiries, and merger reviews, including from disclosure under the Official Information Act. This is intended to support fuller engagement with the commission by giving businesses greater confidence that commercially sensitive information will be protected.

Following submissions, the bill has been amended to better balance that confidence with public accountability. The bill has been improved through the select committee process and now strikes the right balance between strong competition enforcement and practical certainty for business. Its objective remains clear: to promote competitive markets that deliver fairer prices, greater choice, and innovation for consumers.

I promised we'd delivered this reading within five minutes. I commend the bill.

ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Greg O'Connor): This debate is interrupted and set down for resumption next sitting day. The House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. on Tuesday, 4 August 2026. Enjoy your evening.

Debate interrupted.

The House adjourned at 6 p.m.