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WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

31 March and 1 April 2009

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WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Responses have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers

Tuesday, 31 March 2009

Red Hill Show: accreditation

Raised with: Agriculture

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 15 October 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the adjournment debate on 15 October 2008, concerning the Red Hill Show.

I trust that this issue can be resolved by constructive and mature discussions between the parties directly involved and would encourage them to continue to work towards achieving a mutually acceptable outcome. As the bodies involved in this issue are independent of government, it is inappropriate for me to intervene in this matter.

Technical and further education: teacher salaries

Raised with: Skills and Workforce Participation

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 15 October 2008

REPLY:

The Victorian TAFE Association (representing TAFE institutes) and the Australian Education Union signed a Heads of Agreement for a Multiple Business Agreement for TAFE teachers on 16 December 2008.

The new agreement is consistent with the Victorian Government's wages policy and will provide well deserved salary increases to our TAFE teachers. Under the agreement TAFE teachers (subject to agreed implementation arrangements) will have access to a salary increase from 1 October 2008 with further increases on 1 October 2009, 2010 and 2011.

The agreement also provides a new classification structure to be implemented from 1 July 2009 which includes a new top of the incremental scale and broadbanding of the first two senior educator levels. It also includes a new salary structure for casual teachers based on their teaching qualifications and changes to the way in which casual teachers may be employed.

On 26 August 2008 the Victorian Government announced *Securing Jobs for your Future—Skills for Victoria*. This reform package will deliver \$316 million in extra funding over the next four years. It will provide an additional 172,000 training places for Victorians and further strengthen our world-class TAFE network.

The reform package also provides \$2.5 million for two initiatives to boost the TAFE teacher workforce. These initiatives include a program to recruit industry experts as teachers and a program to broaden the skills of existing teachers. The Government will also continue to support the TAFE Development Centre to provide advice and work with TAFE Institutes to implement professional development strategies for TAFE teachers.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that Victoria's skills system is a national leader in skills development and will continue to support Victoria's TAFE Institutes to deliver a strong future for Victorians.

Crime: sentencing**Raised with: Attorney-General****Raised by: Mr Finn****Raised on: 15 October 2008****REPLY:**

It is not appropriate for me to comment on a particular sentencing decision. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, it is impossible to make a meaningful assessment of the appropriateness of a particular sentence without knowing all the relevant facts of the case presented to the sentencing court. Secondly, our political system is based on the centuries old principle of separation of powers between the courts, the Parliament and the Government.

Under Victoria's legal system, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) determines whether or not to appeal against any sentence. The DPP is an independent prosecuting authority whose decisions are not subject to ministerial or departmental direction. The DPP may lodge an appeal against the inadequacy of a sentence if he is satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so.

Sentencing is a highly complex task which requires courts to consider a number of matters, such as the seriousness of the offence, the culpability of the offender and the personal circumstances of the victim. The sentencing court must balance the interests of the community in denouncing criminal conduct with the interests of the community in seeking to ensure that, as far as possible, offenders can be reintegrated into society.

However, the Victorian Government recognises that sentencing impacts on all members of the community, and is committed to ensuring that informed community views can be taken into account in this process on a permanent and formal basis.

To achieve this, the Government has established the Sentencing Advisory Council. One of the key features of the Council is its broad membership. The Council comprises twelve members, including persons with experience in community issues affecting the courts, persons with experience in both the prosecution and defence of criminal offences, persons with experience in victims of crime support and advocacy and a person with direct experience as a victim of crime.

The functions of the Council include consulting with the public on sentencing matters, conducting research into sentencing and providing information to the public and the judiciary on the operation of the sentencing system. Information about the Council may be found at www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au. You are welcome to contact the Council directly with any suggestions you have about sentencing—Ph: 1300 363 196.

With regard to the operation of section 45 of the *Crimes Act 1958*, which establishes the offence of sexual penetration of a child under the age of 16, you may wish to note that on 10 October 2008 I wrote to the Council seeking the Council's views on the operation of that section.

In particular, I am seeking the Council's advice on the adequacy of the current maximum penalties that apply to the different circumstances in which the offence of sexual penetration of a child under the age of 16 may be committed.

I have asked the Council to report back to me by 1 September 2009.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Driver Education Centre of Australia: Careful Cobber program**Raised with: Skills and Workforce Participation****Raised by: Ms Lovell****Raised on: 16 October 2008**

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 16 October 2008, regarding the Careful Cobber program at the Driver Education Centre of Australia (DECA).

DECA is a registered training organisation that is contracted to provide government subsidised training through a performance agreement with the Victorian Skills Commission.

However, insofar as the Careful Cobber focuses on traffic safety education for students in Victoria, the responsibility for this program falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Education.

You will need to refer your question to the Hon Bronwyn Pike, MP, for response.

Consumer affairs: olive oil marketing

Raised with: Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 28 October 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Adjournment Debate on 28 October 2008, about the possible misleading and deceptive advertising in the marketing of olive oil in Australia. In particular, you referred to an article by Leslie White that appeared in the Weekly Times of 15 October 2008. The article was headlined "Testing Reveals Oil Scam".

You raised concerns regarding the possible mislabelling of olive oil products and asked that as a matter of urgency I investigate the possible fraudulent olive oil marketing practices in Victoria and implement appropriate regulations. The Australian Olive Association Ltd has also brought the matters raised by you to my attention.

The importation and labelling of olive oil products is not an issue confined to Victoria and I believe that the Australian Olive Association Ltd has written to other State Government Ministers in Victoria as well as to Federal Ministers. Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) advises me that the Association has already met with representatives of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) because of the Australia wide implications of these issues. CAV will continue to liaise with and assist the ACCC where required.

CAV has also advised me that enforcement of these matters is hampered by the lack of an Australian Standard for olive oil. In my response to the Australian Olive Association I recommended that the olive industry involve itself in the development of such a standard and that it approach Standards Australia to do so.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Police: Craigieburn station

Raised with: Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 28 October 2008

REPLY:

Victoria Police has provided the following information relating to calls for police assistance on 24 October 2008 to a private residence in Craigieburn that was reported to both the Craigieburn Police Station and to D24 through the '000' emergency number.

At approximately 11.48 pm, the victim made a call to '000' from the residence in question. Categorised as a priority one call, a request for police attendance was immediately dispatched to the patrolling Craigieburn unit as well as two patrolling Broadmeadows units. The patrol Sergeant was also notified of the incident. At 11.54 pm, all three units notified communications they were on the scene. Subsequently, the night shift Crime Unit (CIU) and a Dog Squad unit were alerted to the incident and were en-route to lend assistance. Police also called an ambulance to attend due to injuries sustained by people at the scene. At 12.04 am, police indicated to communications that they had one offender in custody with a second offender arrested eight minutes later.

While a call had been made to the Craigieburn Police Station on 24 October 2008 relating to this incident, there was no record of the victim calling the police station for assistance. The police member on duty at Craigieburn indicates that the police station received one call and as details were being obtained from the caller, the police member became aware that her colleagues had already reached the location and were investigating the matter. That call concluded shortly after.

Three members are routinely rostered for the night shift at Craigieburn Police Station, with two on patrol and one member remaining in the watch house to answer calls, as was the case on 24 October 2008.

Claims that it took police 21 minutes to arrive at the scene are incorrect, as police members did attend promptly.

Crime: Prahran and Albert Park electorates

Raised with: Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 12 November 2008

REPLY:

The Brumby Government is committed to providing safe streets and homes for Victorians by ensuring Victoria Police is highly professional and well resourced.

Since coming to office, the State Government has increased the number of police by over 1,400. Further, we have increased funding to Victoria Police to a record budget of more than \$1.75 billion in 2008-09, and funded the construction and refurbishment of over 150 police stations across the state.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing positive results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 24.5 per cent since 2000-01, with Victoria being the safest state in Australia.

However, the fight against crime is ongoing. That is why at the last election the Government committed to a further increase of 350 sworn police by 2010, as well as an additional 50 forensic and specialist investigators. In addition to this, the Government committed to providing additional resources and equipment to assist police in their work, including an extra 100 police cars.

Victoria's liquor laws have been amended to allow Victoria Police to respond proactively to alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour. New legislation provides police with the power to shut down licensed premises immediately for 24 hours in the event of violence occurring which could risk public safety. Police can also immediately issue notices to ban individuals who are drunk, disorderly or behaving in a riotous or disorderly manner to prevent them from remaining in the area and from re-entering a licensed premises or designated area for a 24 hour period. As at 15 December 2008 police had issued 400 banning notices.

The Brumby Government is aware of the human and economic impact of alcohol abuse in Victoria. The Ministerial Taskforce on Alcohol and Public Safety established in late 2007 has led the development of a whole of Government approach to preventing and reducing harm associated with alcohol misuse in Victoria. The Government recently introduced a \$37 million Alcohol Action Plan that, over the next five years, aims to encourage safe and sensible alcohol use by focusing on alcohol related health issues and alcohol advertising,

through the conduct of a community awareness and educational campaign, and enhanced law enforcement in and around licensed venues.

The new Alcohol Action Plan supports the initiatives that the Government and Victoria Police have already implemented. Victoria Police recently announced the establishment of a State Licensing Taskforce to tackle issues at venues in the metropolitan area including the CBD, Prahran and St Kilda and in regional centres such as Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Warrnambool. Police are also conducting specific operations on Friday and Saturday nights to target inappropriate licensee and crowd behaviour.

The Premier recently announced that the Government would provide Victoria Police with an extra \$11 million in funding as part of a comprehensive package to address safety in central Melbourne. This funding will be focused towards a more visible police presence, stronger enforcement, a greater onus on patrons and licensees to act responsibly and addressing the culture of alcohol and violence. The funding will be targeted to fast track the recruitment of 50 extra permanent police to support the Safer Streets Taskforce with up to an additional 150 members being available for deployment on Friday and Saturday nights.

The additional resources allocated to the Safer Streets Taskforce will be available for central Melbourne as well as any other precinct or purpose as determined by the Chief Commissioner. For example, in July 2008 the Taskforce assisted transit police in an operation to target troublemakers before they disembarked in the city. Taskforce resources may be deployed by police command to those areas where public order, licensing and crime occurs or is anticipated to occur.

A total of nine localities, including the areas of Prahran and St Kilda you refer to, have now been declared as designated entertainment precincts by the Director of Liquor Licensing where 24 hour banning notices may be imposed. These areas are determined following consultation with the Chief Commissioner of Police and are intended to provide police with an additional option when dealing with alcohol related violence and offending.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Firearms: licences

Raised with: Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 3 December 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the issues raised by you in the Legislative Council on 3 December 2008, relating to concerns expressed by your constituent about the fact that his firearms licence is required to display his address. Your constituent has suggested that, if his licence were lost or stolen, this could provide persons with criminal intent with information about the location of his firearms. You note that while handguns are required to be stored in a safe, rifles may be stored in a locked cupboard.

The requirement that a firearms licence display the address of the owner is one of the core requirements of the National Firearms Agreement entered into by all States and Territories and the Commonwealth after the tragic events at Port Arthur in 1996. Safe storage of firearms is also a key element of that Agreement and the Brumby Government is committed to upholding the principles of the Agreement.

While I appreciate the concerns raised by your constituent, the key issue is to ensure that all licensees store their handguns and rifles appropriately. A recent Australian Institute of Criminology study has shown that the key reason for theft of firearms is that the firearms are not appropriately stored. I therefore believe that if firearms are appropriately stored, the risk of theft is lessened.

I thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Otway Basin: carbon storage

Raised with: Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 3 February 2009

REPLY:

Thank you for your Adjournment Debate Question on 3 February 2009, concerning outstanding invoices to be paid to Mr Peter Parsons for restoration works after activities carried out by the operators of the CO2CRC Otway Project.

Firstly, I advise that the matters you raised do not directly fall within my portfolio area. The Secretary of the Department of Transport is responsible for administering these matters. However as the question was addressed to me, and I have had a role to play in the delivery of CO2CRC Otway Project, I am happy to provide you with a response.

The Department of Transport (DOT) has advised that the invoices you refer to are required to be prepared in the correct format by Mr Parsons and his solicitor. Through his solicitors, Mr Parsons was advised of this requirement in September 2008 and February 2009.

Once the invoices are received, DOT will expedite their processing, provided the invoices are in good order and payment is warranted.

Should further issues arise in relation to these payments, I suggest that in the first instance, Mr Parsons contact DOT to resolve them.

Planning: fire regulations compliance

Raised with: Planning

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 3 February 2009

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to maintaining essential safety measures in buildings and places of public entertainment and minimising risks for people occupying such buildings.

The Building Regulations 2006 recognise that it is difficult for owners of older buildings to provide the same standards as more recently constructed buildings that have been required to provide additional safety services at the time they were built. Therefore the requirements are separated into those for buildings built before 1 July 1994 and those built after 1 July 1994.

Owners of buildings constructed prior to 1994 must:

- Ensure that any existing safety equipment, safety fittings or safety measures are maintained and fulfilling their purpose (including exits and paths or travel to exits); and
- Prepare an annual essential safety measures report. The first report is due before 13 June 2009 and then each year before the anniversary of that date.

The requirement to prepare an annual essential safety measures report is the only new requirement for buildings built prior to 1 July 1994 provided under the Building Regulations 2006. The Regulations do not require the automatic upgrade of systems in buildings when regulations change.

However, where a building built prior to 1994 is substantially altered post 1994, the owner must comply with the new requirements under the Building Regulations 2006.

The form of the essential safety measures report is set out in Regulation 1215. The Building Commission also provide an approved form for this purpose. The form can be accessed from the Building Commission website at: <http://www.buildingcommission.com.au/www/html/560-essential-safety-measures.asp>.

The report, for all buildings built prior to 1994, requires that the owner of the building certify and ensure that the annual essential safety measures report and records of maintenance checks, service and repair work are available on the premises for inspection by the municipal surveyor or chief officer after 24 hours notice. In the majority of cases this certification could be undertaken by the building owner and would not require any additional outlay.

As building owners have an obligation to ensure that an essential safety measure is maintained so that it operates satisfactorily and fulfils its purpose, I do not consider it appropriate to provide exemptions from the current requirements.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade: Footscray station

Raised with: Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 3 February 2009

REPLY:

The Footscray Fire Station is a safe, state-of-the art fire station of quality and design which maintains the cultural heritage of a historic building. The design of the building is not flawed and was reviewed and approved by all relevant parties and the United Fire Fighters Union (UFU) was consulted at the planning stage.

I have been advised by the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB), that the ladder platform appliances are not available for every station and that MFESB has four ladder platforms, which are in strategic locations—Oakleigh, Windsor, Eastern Hill and Deer Park. Since the ladder platform was housed in Deer Park two years ago, it has been determined that this location is more convenient for servicing a broader part of the metropolitan fire district and beyond, due to the Western Ring Road with easy access to the north and west. First on scene response times are not affected as this is considered a secondary appliance.

The sleeping quarters for firefighters have been removed from the ground floor to ensure a quieter resting environment. Various other fire stations have sleeping quarters on higher levels and exiting via the stairs has not significantly reduced response times. All steps are highlighted with yellow safety grips with signs in various locations to act as a safety reminder.

Disabled access is only available to the ground floor due to the heritage overlay on the building, and the planning and construction of the building was complete prior to the release of the MFESB Disability Action Plan in December 2008. All efforts will be made to ensure that future developments address the needs of people with disability wherever possible and/or feasible.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council: recommendations

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 4 February 2009

REPLY:

The Government recognises the strong connection that many land-holders have with licensed river frontage areas adjoining their properties.

While grazing will cease in some river frontage areas (such as those in parks), for the remainder (such as remaining public land water frontages), the Government supports a voluntary and collaborative approach being undertaken with land-holders and natural resource agencies to remove stock grazing from high value river frontages, and the development of practical solutions for fencing issues.

The Government has developed a \$38 million overall funding package to implement its decisions on the VEAC recommendations.

Air services: landing fees

Raised with: Industry and Trade

Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips

Raised on: 4 February 2009

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 4 February 2009 in relation to the Aerodrome Landing Fees Act 2003.

The Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development conducted a review of the Aerodrome Landing Fees Act 2003.

The Department conducted the review through liaison and consultation with both regional and domestic airport owners and operators, and with the practical assistance of the Australian Airports Association.

All Australian airport operators have the ability to set recovery fees for services provided to the aviation community and it is common practice for the owners of major airports such as Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane airports to set a fee or negotiate an Aeronautical Services Agreement with airlines for the services provided.

Some smaller regional and domestic airport owners also have specific arrangements in place with aircraft operators but many do not set recovery fees because their airport has limited resources, or the airport owner wishes to forgo setting fees because of the perceived benefit aircraft operations bring to the community and the fear of driving aircraft operators away from their airport due to the introduction of fees.

South Australia and Tasmania were the first States to introduce an Aerodrome Landing Fees Act and since 1999 some 14 airports in South Australia (SA) have chosen to publish aeronautical fees in the SA Government Gazette. No airport in Tasmania has established a landing fee charge to date.

The Victorian Aviation Strategy Committee was approached by Mr David Piper, the then President of the Victorian Division of the Australian Airports Association and a member of the Australian Owners and Pilots Association to review the South Australia and Tasmania airport landing fees acts with the intent of introducing legislation in Victoria. Following extensive consultation, an Aerodrome Landing Fees Act was introduced in 2003.

The purpose of the Act is to provide a legal framework that is designed to assist regional and domestic aerodrome operators to collect recovery fees (if so desired) for the utilisation of aerodrome resources that are supplied and funded by the airport operator when they have been activated and utilised by an aircraft owner or pilot. These services include, but are not limited to the supply of navigational aids, airport lighting and services provided by the airport operator such as utilisation of the runway and parking of an aircraft.

To date, Avalon, Essendon and Moorabbin airports are the only airports that have published an aeronautical fee in the Government Gazette and an example of a typical fee structure can be recognised from the Essendon airport fee structure.

As part of the Aerodrome Landing Fees Act review process, Essendon airport acknowledged that it does not have the jurisdiction to charge a fee for aircraft that transit through Essendon airport airspace without the aircraft activating or utilising the services that are provided by the airport owner. However, it is also recognised that the airport owner can charge for aircraft attempting, or aborting a landing "if" the services provided by the airport have been requested or activated by the aircraft.

Aeronautical fees at Essendon airport also apply to the arrival at, or take-off, or use of the airport facilities and services by an aircraft. Fees are also set for the parking of an aircraft and the utilisation of the airport by an aircraft that touches down during a training exercise.

Wild pigs: control

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Hall

Raised on: 5 February 2009

REPLY:

Parks Victoria has undertaken feral pig control works in the Alpine National Park since 2005; in the past three years approximately 56 feral pigs have been trapped in the eastern alps area.

Monitoring the feral pig population is still occurring along the main infestation area of the Snowy River, and control measures will continue to be undertaken.

Parks Victoria has recently increased its ability to respond to feral pigs and now has two staff members based at Omeo dedicated to dealing with pest animals and plants. These staff will continue the good work done over the past two years.

With regards to the area surrounding your constituent's property Parks Victoria has assisted the Department of Sustainability and Environment by providing advice and expertise in the Gelantipy area. This is a state forest.

Planning: Chelsea project

Raised with: Planning

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 5 February 2009

REPLY:

On 4 February 2009, the Premier announced that the Victorian Government would take action to fast-track significant development projects to help Victoria through the global financial crisis.

Key reforms to speed up investment and jobs will centre on the State Government undertaking a rolling audit of pending projects and identifying significant projects that will deliver economic and employment benefits while meeting the Government's planning policy objectives.

Once projects are identified I will consider whether to take a range of actions including:

- Calling in significant projects that generate jobs, environmental or social benefits held up at VCAT;

- Removing roadblocks that may be holding up good development projects;
- Calling in complex planning permit applications from councils and proponents that are gridlocked to achieve quicker approvals; and
- Identifying projects early and working with councils and proponents to achieve quicker approvals through existing planning processes.

The Government will work in partnership with VCAT to ensure potential investment and employment is unlocked by fast-tracking significant projects and reducing the current backlog.

Police: Sunshine

Raised with: Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 26 February 2009

REPLY:

The Brumby Government is committed to providing safe streets and homes for Victorians by ensuring Victoria Police is highly professional and well resourced.

Since coming to office, the State Government has increased the number of police by over 1,400. Further we have increased funding to Victoria Police to a record budget of more than \$1.75 billion in 2008-09, and funded the construction and refurbishment of over 150 police stations across the state.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing good results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 24.5 per cent since 2000-01, with Victoria being the safest state in Australia.

However, the fight against crime is ongoing. That is why at the last election the Government committed to a further increase of 350 sworn police by 2010, as well as an additional 50 forensic and specialist investigators. In addition to this, the Government committed to providing additional resources and equipment to assist police in their work, including an extra 100 police cars.

Decisions on the placement of police throughout the state are operational matters and are made by police command on the basis of assessed need. It is important that this process is not subject to political interference. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner of Police that the level of policing across Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective Regional Command Officers, with a view to maintaining optimum policing effectiveness.

Victoria Police deploys first response police across its 56 Police Service Areas using a sophisticated resource allocation model incorporating 12 characteristics of the local community that are used to predict levels of crime and road trauma; the population of an area is just one of these. Victoria Police uses this model to ensure that police resources are distributed equitably and according to demonstrated operational need. It should be noted that, since 1999, the number of first response officers has increased in all police regions across Victoria.

I trust this information is of assistance and thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Responses have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers

Wednesday, 1 April 2009

Nursing homes: air conditioning

Raised with: Senior Victorians

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 3 February 2009

REPLY:

- Residential aged care is a Commonwealth Government program. The Commonwealth is responsible for funding, regulating and monitoring standards of facilities and care in all residential aged care services, including those operated by Victorian public sector agencies. The standards apply nationally.
- The Domain Sale nursing home is a privately owned and operated service which is funded and regulated by the Commonwealth under the provisions of the Commonwealth Aged Care Act (1997).
- Commonwealth standards do not require air conditioning of residential aged care buildings. Providers are however required to ensure residents are comfortable and well cared for and that services meet care standards and outcomes, including provision of appropriate living environments.
- Victoria is unique among the States in that Victorian public sector agencies operate 195 residential aged care services throughout the State. All of these services comply with Commonwealth requirements, including building standards certification and accreditation.
- New State owned services are designed to meet both Commonwealth requirements and contemporary community and resident expectations. These buildings are designed in accordance with environmentally sustainable design (ESD) principles to provide adequate comfort levels for residents and staff, while minimising or negating the need for air conditioning.
- The design approach for public sector facilities south of the Great Dividing Range is to air condition common day and activity areas but not bedrooms, which are heated and ventilated and typically have ceiling fans, replicating home-like environments. North of the range, air conditioning of bedrooms is common. Where possible, existing buildings replicate these principles and in all cases special consideration is given to residents with specific needs for climate control, for whom special arrangements may be made.
- The first state facility to be built to ESD principles was coincidentally Wilson Lodge, also at Sale. This facility was awarded an Excellence in Sustainability award by the Australian Institute of Refrigeration Air Conditioning and Heating in 2004. The facility exceeds comfort levels using a third less power compared to a conventional nursing home.
- ESD features of Wilson Lodge include slab heating and geothermal cooling, external sun shading, collection of rainwater, utilisation of water flow control systems, use of natural ventilation and the automatic control of lighting, as well as evaporative air conditioning units in all lounge rooms and multipurpose areas.

Mentone beach: pollution

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr D. Davis

Raised on: 5 February 2009

REPLY:

Thank you for your Adjournment Debate Question about the pollution event at Mentone beach in early February.

As I stated in my answer to the House, EPA investigated possible causes of the elevated bacteria levels found in samples from Mentone beach on 2 February and identified a local point source, a blocked toilet at the Mentone Surf Lifesaving Club. In response, the Kingston Council repaired the blockage and the toilet was closed to the public. Bacterial levels at the beach returned to normal on 4 February and sampling since then has continued to report normal levels.

The above information was available on the Beach report website <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/beachreport/> as soon as it was verified. Beach alerts were also published in the Herald Sun and Age newspapers.

Regular monitoring of water quality as happens for EPA's Beach Report assists EPA, water authorities and local councils in responding to pollution incidents when they occur.

EPA does not close beaches. Beach Report provides information so that beachgoers can make an informed decision about which beach they will visit. If results exceed the bacterial thresholds that have been agreed with DHS, EPA works with the local council to provide advice to beach users and the community. Council may erect advisory signs at the beach depending on the circumstances.

EPA's Beach Report program is based upon the approach recommended by the World Health Organisation and Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council.

The USEPA recommend a median value of 35 enterococci per 100 mL over a 30 day period for marine recreational waters. Victoria's State Environment Protection Policy value is the same as that used by the USEPA.

EPA's Beach Report is an annual summer program that monitors water quality at 36 beaches in Port Phillip Bay. It provides beach quality water information to the community so that people can make informed decisions about which beach they will visit. I expect EPA to continue to provide clear, timely advice that the community can rely on and trust.

Mentone beach: pollution

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Viney

Raised on: 5 February 2009

REPLY:

Thank you for the adjournment debate matter you raised about the pollution event at Mentone beach in early February 2009.

As I stated in my answer to the House, EPA investigated possible causes of the elevated bacteria levels found in samples from Mentone beach on 2 February 2009 and identified a local point source, a blocked toilet at the Mentone Surf Lifesaving Club. In response, the Kingston Council repaired the blockage and the toilet was closed to the public. Bacterial levels at the beach returned to normal on 4 February 2009 and sampling since then has continued to report normal levels.

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EPA's Beach Report is an annual summer program that monitors water quality at 36 beaches in Port Phillip Bay. It provides beach quality water information to the community so that people can make informed decisions about

which beach they will visit. I expect EPA to continue to provide clear, timely advice that they community can rely on and trust.

Foster care: funding

Raised with: Community Services

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 26 February 2009

REPLY:

Thank you for raising this matter in the Legislative Council on 26 February 2009.

The Brumby Government recognises the invaluable role foster carers perform in the community, providing care for children unable to live with their families due to issues of abuse or neglect. This Government is committed to improving services for children and young people in out of home care in Victoria. Support for foster carers and foster care services is recognised as being vital to the care of children.

Victoria has in place a strong framework of standards which contribute to high quality foster care services and ensure the basic needs of children's safety, education and well being are met. In addition, Victoria has introduced a comprehensive out of home care training and assessment package for use by all foster care services in Victoria when recruiting, assessing and training carers.

In recent years, the Government has made significant investments to improve support for foster carers. These include an increase of \$4 million in recurrent annual funding to foster care services commencing in 2006/07 to strengthen support provided to carers, a commitment in 2004/05 of \$5 million annually to improve support to carers in meeting the education and medical needs of children in their care, and funding of \$2.1 million in 2005/06 rising to \$6 million by 2009/10 to implement a new model of therapeutic foster care.

Recruitment and retention of carers is a challenge in Victoria as it is in all welfare systems. In July 2006, the Government provided \$500,000 for a Foster Care Communication and Recruitment Strategy (FCCRS) project to the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

The strategy aimed to increase the number of new foster carers and improve retention of current carers, and to engage all Victorian foster care services in the effective recruitment and retention strategies. A major component of this initiative is a communications and marketing strategy over 3-5 years. Although this is a long term initiative, I am pleased to advise some positive early outcomes, including some reports of increased enquiries about foster care, less foster carers leaving the system, improved cross-regional service co-operation and greater carer involvement in recruitment.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is also undertaking a detailed and comprehensive review of out of home care that will set new strategic directions for services for children in out of home care, including those children placed in foster care.

With regard to kinship care, placement within the family network is now the first placement option considered by Child Protection for a child whenever a decision is made to place a child away from their parents. In recognition of this trend and to ensure that kinship carers are supported to provide high quality care, DHS has developed a new policy framework, guided by an advisory committee and extensive feedback from DHS regional staff, community service organisation based practitioners, kinship carers, children in kinship care and their advocates.

A new kinship care program model has recently been developed. The new model is primarily focused on more effectively meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children in statutory kinship care but is also intended to enhance the available community supports for all children in kinship care to minimise the need for Child Protection intervention.