

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

2 and 3 June 2009

(Extract from book 7)

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			Vogels, Mr John Adrian	Western Victoria	LP

¹ Appointed 3 February 2009

² Resigned 9 January 2009

CONTENTS

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

TUESDAY, 2 JUNE 2009

<i>Rail: level crossing safety</i>	2769
<i>Planning: Seymour development</i>	2770
<i>Buses: western suburbs</i>	2770
<i>Bena-Kongwak Road, South Gippsland: bridge</i>	2771
<i>Rail: Werribee line</i>	2771
<i>Rail: Yarraville level crossing</i>	2773
<i>Buses: Hamilton</i>	2773
<i>Rail: Blackburn level crossing</i>	2774
<i>Public transport: disabled access</i>	2774
<i>Rail: Melton–Bacchus Marsh line</i>	2775
<i>Disability services: supported accommodation</i>	2776
<i>Taxis: driver certification</i>	2776
<i>Country Fire Authority: Elphinstone and Bendigo brigades</i>	2777
<i>Rail: cancellations</i>	2777
<i>Police: Sunshine</i>	2778
<i>Rail: public safety</i>	2778
<i>Weeds: control</i>	2779
<i>Commissioner for environmental sustainability: strategic audit</i>	2780
<i>Water: Macalister irrigation district drought reserve</i>	2780
<i>Police: licensing services division</i>	2781
<i>Bushfires: appeal fund</i>	2782
<i>Crime: Albert Park and Bentleigh electorates</i>	2782
<i>Police: western suburbs</i>	2783
<i>Hallam Road, Hampton Park: upgrade</i>	2783
<i>Lake Connewarre: management plan</i>	2784
<i>Drought: Southern Metropolitan Region sporting clubs</i>	2784
<i>Wangaratta: skate park</i>	2785
<i>Bushfires: fencing</i>	2785
<i>Otway Forest Park: trail bikes</i>	2786

WEDNESDAY, 3 JUNE 2009

<i>Water: Maryborough</i>	2787
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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, 2 June 2009

Rail: level crossing safety

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 28 February 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 28 February 2008, regarding action to improve road-user behaviour around railway level crossings.

Thank you for recognising the work done to upgrade safety at railway level crossings and the initiatives to raise motorist awareness of rail crossing safety.

The *Don't Risk It* Level Crossing advertising campaign was first run in late 2005, with subsequent phases in 2006 and 2007. As part of the State Government's \$33 million Level Crossing Safety Package announced on 25 June 2007, a further \$2 million was allocated to update the *Don't Risk It* advertising campaign to educate motorists on new safety measures and tougher penalties.

An updated television, print and radio campaign was screened throughout December 2007 and early January 2008. An educational CD was distributed to all primary schools to coincide with the campaign.

In addition to the above a localised print campaign has been developed for the Mildura Freight Upgrade project and the State level crossing upgrade program. Two variations on the *Don't Risk It* print advertisement have been created and will run in local papers as works associated with both the rail crossing upgrade program and the Mildura project are completed.

I am also advised that Victoria Police is working closely on a 'Targeted Education and Enforcement Pilot' with the Australasian Railway Association 'National Railway Crossing Safety-Behavioural Strategy Plan'. The pilot involves four trial sites in Victoria.

The Victorian sites are all in the western half of the State, with the control sites in the east, together with two urban sites which were separated by an appreciable distance in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

The Victorian Railway Crossing Safety Steering Committee is also liaising closely with all stakeholders including Victoria Police who have significantly increased the number of railway crossing enforcement infringements throughout the State in 2007, compared to previous years.

The Level Crossing Safety Package also includes a range of penalties for level crossing infringements. The new penalties for drivers who disobey railway level crossing signals will rise from a \$177 fine and three demerit points to \$430 and four demerit points. In addition, new offences have been introduced for speeding to beat a train, crossing tracks when lights and bells are operating, or weaving in between boom gates that are already down. These offences carry a fine of \$3,304, four demerit points and an automatic three months licence suspension.

Speed limits will also be lowered from 100 to 80 km/h on road approaches to 72 level crossings across Victoria to give motorists greater reaction time and alert them to rail lines on some of the State's busiest freight routes.

Reducing the speed limit coupled with the above enforcement measures, should send a strong message to motorists to slow down, obey the signs and be prepared to stop. The Transport Accident Commission is also researching motorist behaviour at rail level crossings which is another initiative to make Victorian roads even safer.

If you require further information, please contact Terry Spicer of the Department of Transport on telephone (03) 9655 6422.

Planning: Seymour development

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 13 March 2008

REPLY:

Mitchell Shire Council is the responsible authority for administering the Mitchell Planning Scheme and considering permit applications for the use and development of land within Seymour.

The declaration of flood levels for the Goulburn River at Seymour is the responsibility of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA).

The GBCMA and Mitchell Shire Council introduced updated flooding controls into the Mitchell Planning Scheme via Amendment C27 in January 2006.

The land referred to is located on the northern side of Emily Street, Seymour in close proximity to the Goulburn River. The land is partly affected by both the Business 4 Zone (B4Z) and the Urban Floodway Zone (UFZ) under the Mitchell Planning Scheme. Part of the land is also affected by the Floodway Overlay (FO).

Land use and development opportunities within an Urban Floodway Zone are limited as the land has been identified as an area which has the greatest risk and frequency of being affected by flooding.

Any proposal for use and development of the land should be discussed with the Mitchell Shire Council as the responsible authority for this area.

The Nagambie Lakes project and restaurant referred to was approved under Amendment C36 to the Strathbogie Planning Scheme. This land is not subject to a Flood Overlay.

Buses: western suburbs

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 13 March 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 13 March 2008 regarding bus services in Werribee.

The Government's vision for meeting the transport needs of all Victorians, *Meeting Our Transport Challenges*, was released in May 2006. It outlines an action blueprint for shaping Victoria's transport system into the future.

The blueprint is supported by a \$10.5 billion funding package, the largest single transport investment program in Victoria's history. Two-thirds of the funding is directed towards public transport initiatives aimed at delivering

more services, better safety and improved reliability. It includes a commitment of \$1.4 billion for new and upgraded metropolitan bus services.

Bus route 436 and 440 were upgraded in May 2007 to provide services from 6.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. on weekdays, 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. on Saturdays and 9.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. on Sundays. These bus routes also now operate on all public holidays.

Part of the *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* bus funding has been allocated to a series of local bus area reviews to be conducted across the metropolitan area over the next four years. These reviews will focus on service standards, route coverage, service connectivity, and the effectiveness of existing regional transport linkages. The Hobson's Bay/Wyndham bus service review commenced in February 2008.

This review has engaged local council, bus operators, community groups, schools and commuters through two community workshops. More information on the bus service reviews can be found on the Department of Transport website at <www.doi.vic.gov.au>.

Bena-Kongwak Road, South Gippsland: bridge

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 10 April 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 10 April 2008 regarding the Bena-Kongwak Road rail bridge.

I appreciate the economic and social benefits derived from the dairy industry in Gippsland and the industry's reliance on appropriate infrastructure to maintain its ongoing success.

VicTrack is funding bridge maintenance work which is expected to be completed by November 2008. The current load limit on the bridge is 17.5 tonnes. Upon completion of the work the bridge will undergo load testing which will determine the safe allowable load limit.

South Gippsland Shire Council has proposed the construction of a new two-lane, two-way bridge over the rail line on a new alignment. Council, as the road authority will need to secure the funding for this project. VicTrack is available to assist Council with any planning or rail infrastructure logistics matters in preparation for such a project.

Rail: Werribee line

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 17 April 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 17 April 2008 regarding Werribee line train services.

Werribee train services are not currently bypassing the City Loop and travelling direct to Flinders Street Station, as you stated. This change to the timetable will not occur until November 2008.

The continuing climate of high fuel prices combined with significant population growth in Melbourne has led to unprecedented and continued patronage growth across the entire metropolitan rail network. Melbourne's train system is now operating significantly more train kilometres and is carrying more passengers than ever before.

The Government, along with Connex, recently announced a three-stage plan to improve the train timetable by providing more services and better reliability. These measures are aimed at ensuring that the train network performs at its peak prior to the arrival of 18 new trains (commencing in late-2009) and implementation of a significant infrastructure program to increase the capacity of the train network.

Stage one of the plan was implemented on 27 April 2008 and includes 105 additional train services per week. A new evening peak service — the 4.52 p.m. train from Flinders Street Station to Werribee — was introduced. This is in addition to the extra services implemented during 2006 and 2007. For more information visit the Metlink website at: <www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au>.

Stage two, to be delivered in November 2008, will include at least 95 additional weekly train services. Werribee passengers will benefit from the introduction of two new morning peak services and one evening peak service. This is made possible because Werribee peak hour trains will no longer travel via the City Loop and will run directly to and from Flinders Street Station. This has not been an easy decision, as the Government and Connex understand that it will inconvenience some people, particularly those needing to change trains if they want to travel through the City Loop. Some passengers, however, will have their travel time shortened.

The early advice of this change is to enable passengers to determine if they need to change their travel pattern and, if so, the best way for them to do that.

Werribee services currently mesh and cross trains from Upfield, Craigieburn, Sydenham, Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo in order to run via the City Loop. This limits the number of trains that can be scheduled on all lines to the north-west and west of Melbourne, including the Werribee line. Further, a delay on one line interacts with all other services such that the reliability provided to all patrons is affected.

Running peak-hour Werribee trains directly to and from Flinders Street Station will reduce delays and allow more services to be scheduled. Given these circumstances, removing peak-hour Werribee trains from the City Loop was the best option available, despite the inconvenience to some passengers, to enable Connex to improve reliability and allow additional peak services to operate to better meet demand.

To remove conflicts between trains at Jolimont, changes will be made to Epping and Hurstbridge services with all trains arriving at Flinders Street Station before travelling around the City Loop. In the morning peak period, Werribee passengers wishing to travel to City Loop stations are encouraged to change trains at Southern Cross Station and use these services as they should have ample capacity for additional passengers.

Alternatively, passengers can change onto a City Loop train at North Melbourne Station. The upgrade of North Melbourne Railway Station, at a cost of nearly \$35 million, including the installation of escalators, better passenger amenities and improved signage, will significantly improve the station and make transfers to other train lines or buses easier and quicker. Major works are expected to be completed at the end of 2008.

To assist rail passengers travelling to the university and hospital precinct in Parkville and Carlton bus Route 401 from North Melbourne Railway Station was introduced in March 2008. This bus route has improved travel times for passengers travelling to the University of Melbourne and the Carlton area by up to 30 minutes per day. Buses depart from North Melbourne Railway Station at three-minute intervals in the morning and peak periods.

Stage three, to be delivered by mid-2009, will provide further timetable improvements with a focus on improving off-peak frequency. I can assure you that the Werribee line will be given priority in the development of better off peak services.

Rail: Yarraville level crossing

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 31 July 2008

REPLY:

I refer you to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 31 July 2008 regarding a report released by Cross Safe at Yarraville in relation to the Anderson Street railway crossing at Yarraville.

The efforts of Cross Safe to study this crossing are appreciated.

The Anderson Street crossing is one of the 179 crossings on the Connex electrified network which have the optimum level of railway safety controls comprising flashing lights, bells, half boom barriers and pedestrian gates on both sides of the road. The boom barriers and pedestrian gates were installed in March 1997 to replace manual road crossing gates.

On 16 December 2008 I announced funding of \$100,000 to further upgrade the pedestrian crossing controls at Anderson Street, Yarraville. The work will incorporate magnetic gate latches at the crossing which are designed to stop people passing through the emergency exit barrier when the crossing controls have been activated. The latches incorporate "push buttons" to release the emergency gates for people inadvertently on the crossing when the controls are activated and the gates closed due to the imminent approach of a train. The project is expected to be completed and commissioned by early March 2009.

Maribyrnong City Council, as part of its traffic management initiatives, should address the issue of irresponsible pedestrian behaviour on the pedestrian and roadway approaches to the crossing. The railway infrastructure managers are not in a position to address this issue nor would reopening the subway eliminate this behaviour.

Buses: Hamilton

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 10 September 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 10 September 2008 regarding the Hamilton town bus service.

The Brumby Government has demonstrated its commitment to providing high-quality public transport services in regional Victoria by introducing the Hamilton town bus service in 2006. As you have pointed out, the Government's initiative was welcomed as valuable throughout the community, providing links to work, educational, health, shopping, entertainment and recreation facilities, and to V/Line coach services.

Extensive consultation with key community stakeholders was undertaken prior to an initial 18-month trial. The Hamilton taxi company was fully briefed on the proposed town service in 2006, and gave no indication to the Department of Transport (DOT) that the bus service would have an adverse affect on Hamilton's taxi service.

On 31 October 2008, senior representatives of DOT attended a public meeting to discuss the Hamilton town bus service and reassure the Hamilton community that there is no intention to withdraw the service. After careful assessment of feedback and discussion at the meeting, DOT has recommended that the service continue unaltered,

and that it be monitored to ensure it continues to meet the community's needs. To further promote the service and encourage the community to support it through usage, advertisements are being placed with local media.

There is no intention to introduce state-wide service cuts. On the contrary, on 8 December 2008 the Government announced that regional Victorians will benefit from funding of \$4.8 billion for new trains, extra railway tracks, railway station upgrades and bus improvements as part of the Brumby Government's *Victorian Transport Plan*. This is in addition to the \$1.1 billion of existing projects currently being undertaken. In south-western Victoria, services have recently been introduced in Colac, Lake Bolac, Mortlake, Portland, Timboon and Woodford, and the *Victorian Transport Plan* includes an \$80 million initiative to improve bus frequency, extend routes and establish a new central interchange in Greater Geelong.

Rail: Blackburn level crossing

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Atkinson

Raised on: 8 October 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 8 October 2008, regarding the Blackburn Road railway level crossing.

Connex, the responsible rail infrastructure manager, adjusted the level crossing signal controls at Blackburn Road in accordance with the design parameters for computer based interlocking (CBI). While CBI takes longer to validate that the crossing is clear, it is operationally a more reliable and robust system.

The Department of Transport (DOT) recently visited the crossing during "peak" and "off-peak" times to observe train and motor vehicle traffic movement patterns. It is acknowledged that some crossing closures are still longer than others but there has been a marginal improvement since the adjustments were made by Connex.

The timing of railway crossing boom gate operations is programmed to provide the highest level of safety for commuters, road users and the general community. While railway operators try to minimise the time allowed for trains to pass through crossings, several factors influence closure times. These include the late running of scheduled train services, the number of trains travelling through the crossing and special train operating instructions which occur from time to time.

The Blackburn Road railway crossing is currently operating to its optimum level and is consistent with other crossings in the metropolitan area.

Public transport: disabled access

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mrs Kronberg

Raised on: 15 October 2008

REPLY:

I refer to a matter raised during the Adjournment Debate of 15 October 2008 regarding the accessibility of the disabled toilet at Heidelberg Railway Station on 15 August 2008.

Accessible toilet facilities are provided at all Premium Stations, such as Heidelberg, which are staffed from first to last train. For the security and safety of users, it has been necessary to keep them locked. Station staff are required to unlock them on request.

It is regrettable to learn that an elderly disabled woman encountered a lack of appropriate assistance in order to use the accessible toilet.

The Department of Transport monitors the performance of public transport operators. The information you have provided is valuable in assisting with this performance monitoring process. Your concerns have also been forwarded to Connex for consideration and appropriate action.

Rail: Melton–Bacchus Marsh line

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 16 October 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 16 October 2008 regarding improvements to the Melton–Bacchus Marsh railway line.

Since 1999, the Government has invested more than \$1 billion in new trains and tracks for the regional network. The Brumby Government is taking action so that Victorians can have the best transport network in Australia. The *Victorian Transport Plan*, announced by the Premier, is unprecedented in scope and scale with more than \$38 billion in projects to meet growing demands and shape a more efficient and sustainable State.

Railway services to Melton and Bacchus Marsh are currently constrained by a lack of track capacity. The tracks between Sunshine and Footscray are currently shared with Watergardens electrified services as well as Ballarat and Bendigo regional services.

As part of the *Victorian Transport Plan*, \$4 billion is being invested in the Regional Rail Link that will provide a faster connection between Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Melbourne. The project will see the construction of 44 kilometres of twin track from West Werribee to Southern Cross Station via Tarneit and Sunshine, providing for the first time separate tracks for regional and metropolitan trains. The Regional Rail Link will improve the reliability of regional Victorian trains by removing the bottleneck as they reach the Melbourne rail network.

The Regional Rail Link will be complemented by up to 74 new carriages to run on V/Line's busiest lines meaning longer trains and more seats for passengers. Progressive delivery of the carriages will provide V/Line with the ability to support heavily patronised services.

In the longer term, the Government is committed to electrifying services to Melton, subject to partnership with the Commonwealth Government, at a cost of more than \$1.3 billion. Meanwhile, electrifying services to Sunbury will free up more V/Line trains for Melton and Bacchus Marsh services.

The running of peak-hour Werribee trains directly to and from Flinders Street Station has enabled Connex to run two additional morning services—7.01 a.m. and 8.23 a.m. to Flinders Street, and one additional evening service—5.36 p.m. to Werribee, to better meet demand.

Further timetable improvements will be implemented in mid-2009, providing a focus on improving off-peak frequency. Werribee passengers will benefit from an improvement to off-peak services from the current 20 minute frequency to a 10 minute frequency. Other lines will also benefit from timetable improvements.

In addition to these timetable improvements, Werribee passengers will also benefit from the Laverton Rail Upgrade due to be start in 2009. This project will enable additional services to be introduced on the Werribee line including express services.

Disability services: supported accommodation

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mrs Kronberg

Raised on: 13 November 2008

REPLY:

The Government remains committed to providing a variety of accommodation and support options for people with a disability and to ensuring accommodation facilities meet appropriate standards.

\$50 million was announced in the 2008-09 Budget for the replacement of 38 shared supported accommodation facilities through the Disability Housing Trust. A further \$10 million was also provided for the development of new accommodation options for young people with disabilities currently residing in or at risk of entering residential aged care accommodation services.

The Department is currently working on a range of strategies to improve asset management practices and the quality of stock. These strategies have already delivered 45 new houses and refurbished nine existing houses for people with a disability, with a further six new houses to be completed this financial year.

As part of the Kew redevelopment, 93 new supported accommodation facilities were constructed in the community.

It is also recognised that replacement and refurbishment of non-government owned shared supported accommodation should be a priority for those organisations. The Government has assisted non-government organisations to improve the standard of facilities in a number of ways including providing training to staff regarding house maintenance and through the provision of funding of \$15 million in 2006-07 for minor works and equipment, and refurbishment. The disability leasing model implemented in July 2007 also provides non-government organisations with a framework for improving maintenance practices.

Taxis: driver certification

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 5 February 2009

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 5 February 2009 on behalf of Mr King Osei' duro.

The Director of Public Transport is the licensing authority for matters under Part 6, Division 6, of the *Transport Act* 1983 (the Act) relating to Driver Accreditation—commercial passenger vehicle and private bus services. The Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) acts as a delegate of the Director under the Act.

In accordance with the Act, the Director must not issue driver accreditation to a person unless satisfied that person meets the Public Care Objective (PCO) of the Act. The PCO is concerned with ensuring that holders of driver accreditation provide a service with safety, comfort, amenity and convenience. The PCO includes mandatory considerations of an applicant's offence record, in particular their driving history.

I am advised that a notice was sent to Mr Osei' duro on 10 February 2009 in relation to his application for driver accreditation. This notice requests that Mr Osei' duro provides a submission to the VTD prior to it making a decision on his application. The notice states that Mr Osei' duro has 28 days to submit his submission. A decision will be made as soon as possible after the VTD has received a submission from Mr Osei' duro.

Country Fire Authority: Elphinstone and Bendigo brigades

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 10 March 2009

REPLY:

The Victorian Government appreciates the dedication and commitment of all volunteers who give their time to help during an emergency response and the families who support them. The government has already implemented a number of programs that specifically provide support to emergency services volunteers, including the Valuing Volunteers Program and the Community Safety Emergency Support Program that provides emergency services volunteer groups with access to grants for additional emergency equipment and assets.

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) has advised that the damage to the vehicle of the Elphinstone Fire Brigade was as a result of the vehicle sucking in embers and burning the front engine compartment. The brigade used a vehicle loaned by Ford Australia while the damaged vehicle was sourced and replaced under insurance. The replacement vehicle is now in service and fully operational.

In regard to the vehicle of the Bendigo Fire Brigade, I am advised that the damage occurred due to the vehicle hitting a rock. The vehicle has since been repaired under insurance and is back in service and fully operational.

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

Rail: cancellations

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 11 March 2009

REPLY:

Melbourne's train system is now operating significantly more train kilometres and is carrying more passengers than ever before. Metropolitan patronage has grown by more than 70 per cent in the nine years from 1998-99 to 2007-08.

In response to this growth, a number of initiatives have been implemented, including 328 new weekly metropolitan train services introduced in November 2008. Sydenham passengers benefited from 15 new weekly services, with the introduction of 10 new morning peak services and five new evening peak services.

The Victorian Transport Plan, announced by the Premier in December 2008, provides funding of \$92.6 million for the Laverton Rail Upgrade, a project which will enable 'short starter' services to be introduced on the Werribee line that will start and finish at Laverton Railway Station. The project involves the construction of a third platform at Laverton Railway Station, an extra kilometre of track between Laverton and the Altona Loop Junction (and associated signalling works) as well as a new rail bridge over Merton Street, providing improved access to Laverton Railway Station. Once complete, it will enable more services to be delivered along the main line, including express services.

As part of the Plan, the Government will also increase fleet capacity by more than 40 per cent with the purchase of up to 70 new six-car trains. These trains will be progressively delivered from late 2009. A new timetable will be introduced in 2010 to progressively incorporate extra services made possible by the additional trains and stabling upgrades now under construction.

Police: Sunshine

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 12 March 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.

By increasing the number of police by over 1,400, funding the construction and refurbishment of over 150 police stations across the state and funding Victoria Police to a record budget of more than \$1.75 billion in 2008-09, the Government's additional support to Victoria Police has seen Victoria's crime rate fall 24.5 per cent since 2000-01. In continued support, the Government has committed to a further increase of 350 sworn police by 2010, 50 additional forensic and specialist investigators as well as providing additional resources including an extra 100 police cars.

Victoria Police recognise the safety needs of the Sunshine community, recently conducting a blitz on crime in the area that resulted in 10 people being charged. This crackdown forms part of a series of operations expected to take place in the western suburbs throughout the year to address street crimes.

Victoria Police has advised me that there are currently some vacancies in the Brimbank area and they are working to fill them as quickly as possible. I am further advised that four vacancies have recently been filled at Sunshine Police Station with another three positions to be advertised shortly. It is important to note that other police resources across the organisation support local police in the Sunshine area through specific operations, as cased by the recent blitz on crime. It is also worth noting that since 1999, front-line police in the Brimbank police service area, which includes Sunshine, have increased by 28.4 per cent. The area has also experienced a 13.6 per cent decrease in the overall crime rate.

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

Rail: public safety

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 12 March 2009

REPLY:

Representatives from the Department of Transport (DOT) recently met with representatives from the City of Brimbank, Victoria Police, Connex and local community groups to discuss and develop strategies to enhance safety at Sunshine Railway Station.

The Government has committed to a \$4 million project to upgrade yellow lighting with bright white lighting at selected Premium railway stations and subways. Sunshine Railway Station, including the underpass, was upgraded in late 2008 as part of this program.

Additionally, the 2007-08 State Budget included \$14 million to replace the existing analogue Closed Circuit Television surveillance equipment at metropolitan railway stations with digital video recorders, improving image quality and providing for a minimum of 30 days storage of surveillance data. The upgrade at Sunshine Railway Station, including the underpass, has been completed.

Furthermore, Connex has implemented an intelligence-based deployment strategy to enable Authorised Officers to be despatched to an incident when reported, and monitor particular trouble spots on the network. This strategy has seen an increase in the number of Authorised Officers patrolling the Sunshine Railway Station precinct.

As part of *The Victorian Transport Plan*, an investment of \$30 million will enable 50 additional Transit Safety Police to be deployed across the public transport network. Transit Safety Police are Victoria Police members assigned to the transit network to ensure the safety and security of the travelling public. This commitment increases the total number of Transit Safety Police to 250.

An increased presence across the network will improve Victoria Police's capability to undertake patrols and investigate public transport crime. As with all deployments, this process will be guided by the extent of criminal activity and intelligence material gathered by police, and will aid in targeting identified problem areas.

The Victorian Transport Plan is also funding 24 more station staff on the rail network at our busiest city stations, to assist the flow of passengers, improve safety and reduce train dwell times at stations.

In the interests of public safety, considerable effort has been made to increase staffing on the public transport network. Seventy-four railway stations on the network are now staffed from first to last train, including Sunshine Railway Station.

Weeds: control

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 31 March 2009

REPLY:

In relation to the matter concerning a weed infringement notice issued to Mrs Gail Ryan on behalf of the Department of Primary Industries, it is not appropriate for me to intervene in a particular matter that has been lodged with the Infringements Court and where an enforcement order has subsequently been issued for the outstanding fine and associated costs.

However, I draw the Honourable Member's attention to some general options available within the infringements system that his constituent may wish to pursue. For example, where an enforcement order has been issued by the Infringements Court registrar, a person may apply to the registrar for a revocation or withdrawal of that order. If the registrar revokes the order, the matter is then referred to the Magistrates' Court for a full hearing and determination in open court.

The enforcement agency is also notified of this decision and has 21 days in which to write to the Infringements registrar requesting that the matter be withdrawn, in which case no further action is taken against the applicant.

On the other hand, the Infringements registrar may decide there are not sufficient grounds to grant a revocation. On notification of this decision, the applicant may apply to the registrar to have the application for revocation referred instead to the Magistrates' Court for a hearing and determination.

I note that the Honourable Member has also referred this matter by correspondence to the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Joe Helper MP and the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Peter Batchelor MP. As these Ministers' departments are jointly responsible for the issuing of the fine to Mrs Ryan and for the relevant legislation (the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*), it is appropriate that a response based on the particular circumstances of Mrs Ryan's case be provided by those departments.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Commissioner for environmental sustainability: strategic audit

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr D. Davis

Raised on: 31 March 2009

REPLY:

The Government welcomes the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability's Strategic Audit recommendations, which cover areas such as further reducing energy consumption, improving building and procurement sustainability, and better reporting.

This is the fifth year the government's environmental operations have been audited by the Commissioner and results again show a steady improvement. According to the Commissioner's audit, Victorian Government offices decreased their water, energy, vehicle fuel and paper use and produced less waste between 2006-07 and 2007-08.

The Government is taking further action to make its operations more sustainable by expanding environmental management programs to hospitals, schools and TAFE institutes through the Government's on-going expansion of the ResourceSmart program which helps agencies to reduce their environmental impact. So far 75 agencies have joined the program which will continue to expand across government agencies through to 2010.

The Government has committed to reducing annual energy use in government operations by at least 20 per cent below 2000 levels by 2010. Government has also committed to purchasing 25 per cent of its power as GreenPower by 2010.

Departments and agencies are already making progress in the key areas covered by the Commissioner's recommendations. The Government will consider the Commissioner's recommendation in its effects to improve Government's environmental performance.

Water: Macalister irrigation district drought reserve

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 31 March 2009

REPLY:

I refer to the adjournment debate matter you raised on 31 March 2009 concerning Southern Rural Water's (SRW) decision to transfer 500 million litres of water to the Bacchus Marsh Irrigation District from the Macalister Irrigation District's (MID) Thomson drought reserve.

SRW is entitled to six per cent of the inflow to Thomson Reservoir. Over the past 12 years, the average annual volume to SRW under this arrangement has been about 10,000 million litres/year. Of this amount, SRW releases between 3,000 and 4,000 million litres every year for its normal operating purposes. The remaining inflow accumulates in the Thomson Reservoir to build up a drought contingency reserve and would not normally be used except in the case of extreme drought.

The drought reserve is made available to the MID irrigators when Lake Glenmaggie, their main source of water, fails to fill by December and the seasonal allocation is significantly less than 100 per cent. This has occurred twice in the past 12 years. The drought reserve was last called out in the severe 2006-07 drought when the MID allocation reached a maximum of about 60 per cent.

In 2007-08 and 2008-09, SRW transferred 2,000 million litres from the drought reserve for Werribee and Bacchus Marsh irrigators who have experienced a run of very low allocations from the Werribee River. In these two years,

supplies to MID irrigators were relatively plentiful with the volume delivered during 2007–08 in excess of 130 per cent of water entitlements. This amount is also expected in 2008–09. In contrast, allocations to Bacchus Marsh and Werribee in these two years were eight per cent and five per cent of water entitlement.

SRW Board made its decision to support a 500 million litre transfer to its Bacchus Marsh customers for 2009–10. The board then informed the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee and discussed the very limited options to support the Bacchus Marsh customers and the reason why this option was selected. While acknowledging the committee's concerns that a further transfer of water from the drought reserve is a potential risk to the Macalister irrigators' 2009–10 allocations, and noting the committee's preference to delay the decision until there was greater certainty about water availability in the MID in 2009–10, SRW decided to support the transfer because:

- The loss of 500 million litres for MID irrigators would have a relatively small impact, representing only 0.3 per cent of their allocation, while it could increase Bacchus Marsh irrigators' allocation by about eight per cent.
- The 500 million litres transfer, along with several other measures, would enable SRW to provide Bacchus Marsh irrigators with the equivalent of 25 per cent of their allocation in 2009–10 (1,085 million litres). This is the minimum amount necessary to ensure continuity of the main Bacchus Marsh market gardens and industries.
- After very low river inflows into the Werribee storages in 2008–09, and with SRW's share of Werribee storages currently at just over three per cent, SRW concluded that it was essential for business continuity to give early advice to its customers that there would be a minimum 25 per cent allocation for Bacchus Marsh in 2009–10.

Police: licensing services division

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 1 April 2009

REPLY:

I note and appreciate your concern about this particular incident, it is not appropriate for me, as a Government Minister, to interfere in any particular case.

The internal discipline of police officers is dealt with under Part IV of the *Police Regulation Act 1958*, which provides a process to investigate alleged misconduct or other inappropriate behaviour. Section 69 of the Act sets out what constitutes a breach of discipline and section 76 sets out the determinations that may be made if a breach of discipline is proven. Victoria Police has taken a strong stand against police misconduct and corruption and has achieved considerable success in this regard.

Complaints may be made to either, or both, the Ethical Standards Department (ESD) and the Office of Police Integrity (OPI). It is their role to carry out investigations, and make recommendations in specific cases free from political interference. The interests of justice require clear separation between the executive government and the operational independence of Victoria Police, ESD and OPI.

The Ethical Standards Department responds to complaints and must ensure they are effectively investigated. It is also responsible for taking action to maintain and improve the ethical health of the force. The Office of Police Integrity has been set up as an independent and impartial organisation to ensure that Victoria Police maintains the highest ethical and professional standards and that police corruption and serious misconduct is detected, investigated and prevented. The Director, Police Integrity, reports directly to the Parliament.

In October 2007 the OPI tabled a report in the Parliament titled, "A Fair and Effective Victoria Police Discipline System", which makes a number of recommendations for the improvement of the existing system. The Police Regulation Amendment Bill implements the main recommendations of the report and is currently before the Legislative Council.

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

Bushfires: appeal fund

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mrs Kronberg

Raised on: 1 April 2009

REPLY:

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Advisory Panel (the Panel) oversees the Appeal Fund's operation and determines the allocation of funds to individuals and communities affected by the bushfires. The Panel is independent of Government and is made up of community leaders, chaired by former Victorian Governor John Landy AC MBE.

The Panel is responsible for identifying priorities and setting criteria to guide disbursement of funds. In the immediate aftermath of the bushfires, it made a commitment to meet the priority needs of individuals in bushfire affected communities. Subsequently, the Panel made funding to destroyed or damaged principal places of residence a priority, in order to help rehouse people as quickly as possible.

The Victorian Government has been advised that the Panel is aware of the circumstances of damage and loss to holiday and secondary homes and that it will consider the issue in upcoming meetings.

Crime: Albert Park and Bentleigh electorates

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 1 April 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 \$1.89 billion in 2009-10, and funded the construction and refurbishment of over 160 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. I note the Glen Eira police service area which includes Bentleigh, has seen a 34.9 per cent reduction in overall crime since 2000-2001, while the Port Phillip police service area which includes Albert Park, has seen a 47.6 per cent reduction in overall crime for the same period.

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.

I note that you have access to the Victoria Police Recorded Crime Statistics annual publications which provide a detailed analysis of the crime statistics. The information can also be found on the Victoria Police website under *About Victoria Police, Statistics, Crime Statistics*.

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

Police: western suburbs

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 2 April 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 \$1.9 billion in 2009-10. The Government has also funded the construction and refurbishment of over 160 police stations across the state, as well as planning for the replacement of a further two inner metropolitan police stations.

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.

It is important to note that since 1999, the number of front-line police in all five Police Service Areas (PSAs) you refer to have increased. In the Wyndham PSA there are now over 60 per cent more police, and in the Brimbank PSA there are now 42 per cent more. The picture is similar in the Hobsons Bay, Hume and Maribyrnong PSAs, where the number of police has increased by 28 per cent, 20 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

Over the same period crime has fallen in all five PSAs. The most significant fall occurred in the Maribyrnong PSA where the crime rate fell by 35.9 per cent between 2000-01 and 2007-08. Reductions over the same period were recorded for the Hobsons Bay, Wyndham, Brimbank and Hume PSAs, namely 14.3 per cent, 13.9 per cent, 13.6 per cent and 10.8 per cent respectively.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention

Hallam Road, Hampton Park: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips

Raised on: 2 April 2009

REPLY:

As noted by Mr Rich-Phillips, sections of Hallam Road, between the Princes Highway and the South Gippsland Highway, including that between Pound Road and Fordholm Road, have been identified for possible future duplication.

The Government's *Victorian Transport Plan* includes funding of \$1.9 billion for the Outer Suburban Arterial Roads Program to provide capacity improvements on the arterial road network in Melbourne's outer suburbs. However, proposals for such road improvements must be considered and evaluated across metropolitan Melbourne. Any duplication of Hallam Road will be considered in this context.

Lake Connewarre: management plan

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr D. Davis

Raised on: 2 April 2009

REPLY:

A Ramsar plan currently exists for the Port Phillip (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar site, which includes the Lake Connewarre Complex. Parks Victoria has taken a lead role in working with state and local agencies to improve the condition of the site, and chairs the steering committee comprising multiple agencies and land-holders.

Parks Victoria recently appointed a Port Phillip (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar project manager. The project manager will coordinate the delivery of on-ground works across the site over the next 15 months, including pest plant control and fencing of critical habitat. The project manager will seek to engage the community in protecting and improving the site's values.

Both the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Port Phillip Catchment Management Authority (CMA) have contributed significant funds towards the project manager role and a range of actions to protect this internationally significant Ramsar site. In addition, significant state and federal funding has been sourced.

The Lake Connewarre Values Project, which aims to better document the environmental values at Lake Connewarre and assess options to protect and improve the health of its natural systems, is managed by the Corangamite CMA. Corangamite CMA recently advised Parks Victoria and other contributors that the project is complete. Parks Victoria has been invited to view the project findings; outcomes will be communicated to relevant stakeholders in due course and will inform future management actions.

The water quality of the Lake Connewarre is directly affected by downstream movement of tidal water and also freshwater input from Barwon River and local drainage. As part of the Lake Connewarre Values Project, more of the science behind the biological and hydrological values will now be examined to determine whether and what interventions may be required.

Parks Victoria intends to review the current management plan for Lake Connewarre once the Values Project and the extensive community consultation process for the proposed Barwon River Parklands have been finalised.

Drought: Southern Metropolitan Region sporting clubs

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 2 April 2009

REPLY:

The Government is presently responding with a number of initiatives to support councils and sporting organisations in the period of water shortages. The Government has committed a total of \$19.5 million since 2006 to Victorian councils and sporting organisations to undertake water saving projects.

On 13 October 2008 a further \$8.2 million was committed under the *2008–09 Victorian Government Drought Relief Package* for projects which include: replacement of high water use winter grasses on ovals with drought resistant, low water use grasses; installation of water tanks; and the upgrade of sporting surfaces to synthetic surfaces.

The Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs has approved over 450 drought related projects that benefit sport. An arrangement and funding has been put in place in cooperation with Tennis Victoria for metropolitan Melbourne which allows tennis clubs and councils to either: water 1 in 2 tennis courts; or treat the tennis courts to retain moisture and water all tennis courts.

Water corporations are providing Class A and B recycled water and bore water, at various collection points across the State. Councils are able to truck recycled water from stand pipes for watering sporting grounds and parks. There are no restrictions on using recycled water.

Wangaratta: skate park

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 2 April 2009

REPLY:

I can confirm that Wangaratta Rural City Council has submitted a funding application to the Brumby Government's 2009/2010 Community Facility Funding Program—Minor Facilities category for the Wangaratta Skate Park Redevelopment project.

Since 2000, the Victorian Government has invested over \$183 million through the Community Facility Funding Program towards more than 1,900 community facility projects.

The Member's support for the Wangaratta Skate Park Redevelopment project has been noted and will be taken into consideration. Announcements of successful projects will be made in the near future.

Bushfires: fencing

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 6 May 2009

REPLY:

The Department of Sustainability and Environment is progressively undertaking rehabilitation and recovery works in fire affected areas of State forest. Where appropriate the Department is engaging contractors to undertake these works.

Timber surplus to rehabilitation requirements is being made available to fire affected residents for use in repairing fences and replacing firewood supplies damaged or destroyed in the recent fires.

Fire affected residents are able to obtain this timber free of charge from designated areas. Residents should obtain a forest produce licence from their local Department of Sustainability and Environment office. Designated areas have been identified to minimise the safety risks to persons entering the fire affected area.

Fire affected residents in the Churchill area may access emergency firewood and fence post materials at a private property on Carrajung Woodside Road. I am advised that residents are utilising this timber, and supplies are in line with demand.

Otway Forest Park: trail bikes

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Kavanagh

Raised on: 7 May 2009

REPLY:

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change: I am informed that:

Trail bike riding in State forest is a legitimate activity provided it occurs on the legal road network and appropriate licenses and registration is held. To ensure that trail bike riders can continue to enjoy this recreation activity while also balancing this with the needs of rural residents and other forest users, the Victorian Government is undertaking a \$5 million Trail Bike Initiative.

As part of the Trail Bike Initiative, the Department of Sustainability and Environment will:

- Build Trail Bike Visitor Areas;
- Provide educational material;
- Recommend trail bike riding routes;
- Conduct environmental rehabilitation in priority areas;
- Coordinate multi-agency trail bike compliance operations; and
- Invest in research to better inform decisions made by Government.

A number of roads and single tracks within the Otway Forest Park that are not part of the legal road network have been nominated for closure and rehabilitation. The on-ground works associated with the road and track closures are currently being assessed by the Department. It is proposed that works will commence by July 2009.

I am advised that a proposed trail bike touring route through the Otway Forest Park, Otway National Park and Anglesea Heath, north-west of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet, will be confined to the legal road network and the community has participated in decisions about the proposed route.

The Department will continue to consult with the local communities regarding the Trail Bike Initiative.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 3 June 2009

Water: Maryborough

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 12 March 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that:

Central Highlands Water (CHW) has constructed a pipeline from the Moolort groundwater bores direct to the Maryborough water treatment plant as part of its continuing commitment to improving water security and quality for Maryborough. This pipeline will allow groundwater to be delivered directly to the water treatment plant without travelling via the Centenary Reservoir. The pipeline became operational at the end of April 2009.

CHW has also upgraded the Maryborough water treatment plant.

DHS regularly reviews the water quality in Maryborough and is satisfied that CHW is meeting drinking water health parameters.

CHW requires reservoirs closest to treatment plants to be closed to the public and Centenary Reservoir has been closed to the public since 2002. Any unauthorised access to the site is deemed trespass, and able to be prosecuted as such. I understand that there are signs on the Reservoir's perimeter fence advising this situation.

CHW has also undertaken temporary repairs to improve security at Centenary Reservoir and will install additional security fencing during 2009-10 to ensure there is no unauthorised public access.