

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into budget estimates 2005–06

Melbourne — 10 May 2005

Members

Mr W. R. Baxter

Ms C. M. Campbell

Mr R. W. Clark

Mr B. Forwood

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Mr J. Merlino

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Chair: Ms C. M. Campbell

Deputy Chair: Mr B. Forwood

Staff

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Witnesses

Mr S. Bracks, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Veterans' Affairs;

Mr Y. Blacher, Secretary; and

Mr J. MacIsaac, director, senior Victorians and veterans, Department for Victorian Communities; and

Ms B. Mountjouris, director, Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs.

The CHAIR — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the budget estimates for 2005–06. I welcome the Honourable Steve Bracks, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and minister responsible for veterans affairs; Mr Yehudi Blacher, Secretary of the Department for Victorian Communities; Mr James MacIsaac, director, senior Victorians and veterans, departmental officers, members of the public and the media.

In accordance with guidelines for public hearings, I remind members of the public that they cannot participate in the committee proceedings. Only officers of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee secretariat are to approach members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. Departmental officers, as requested by the minister or his chief of staff, can approach the table during the hearing. Members of the media are also requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council committee room. All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcripts early next week.

Before I call on the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and minister responsible for veterans affairs to give a brief presentation on the more complex financial and performance information in his portfolios, I remind all that mobile phones and pagers must be turned off.

Mr BRACKS — Thank you, Chair and members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I am pleased to be here on the sixth occasion to present before the committee. Can I just have some clarification? I understand you want me to start with veterans affairs and then go to multicultural affairs and then to Premier; is that correct?

The CHAIR — That is correct.

Overheads shown.

Mr BRACKS — The veterans affairs portfolio is a new area of responsibility that I took on the between the last time I met with the committee and this time. I will present a brief overview on that and then hand over to you after that.

In June last year at the 89th annual conference of the Returned and Services League state branch I announced that I would assume all responsibility for all veterans affairs issues at a state level in order to give more focus and attention to veterans affairs across the whole of government, and to consolidate that role and function across the whole of government as well. I announced that our key priorities would be to strengthen commemoration, education and support to veterans. I took this important step because we want to provide greater and a more coordinated approach to veterans services over all. We, of course, recognise the changing needs of our aged veterans community as well as an increasing interest amongst the wider community in Australia's involvement in war and peacekeeping.

The Department for Victorian Communities — as you mentioned, Yehudi Blacher is here today as head of that — has provided operational support in order to centralise activities across government. In less than 12 months our government has established important relationships with key ex-service organisations and implemented a number of initiatives focusing on the key areas of commemoration, education and support for the veterans community. I will go to some of those now.

In relation to commemoration and education, I will deal briefly with some of the highlights or initiatives over the last 12 months. We conducted the inaugural Spirit of Anzac Prize, which resulted in nine winning students from every education region in Victoria, and from state, Catholic and independent schools, touring the battlefields of France, Belgium and England in April of this year. It was a very successful event and many members probably saw the outcome of that.

We also implemented the Restoring Community War Memorials Grants program. It is a new program offering a total of about \$500 000 to assist ex-service organisations, schools, local government and community organisations to restore their local memorials. I can indicate to the committee that we had some 79 applications and we are currently assessing those for consideration and announcement very soon.

We have also provided an additional \$100 000 in operational funding to support the Shrine of Remembrance, largely because of the increased activity at the shrine and the education functions provided. There has been something like an 80 per cent increase in visitor demand over the 2004–05 period. That is a significant increase and a lot of it has been school visitations.

We have established a Victorian veterans web site to consolidate all existing Anzac Day web sources and to provide that one-stop shop for students and ex-service community personnel and members to access. We have provided some one-off grants as well: \$40 000 to assist the landscaping works at the Ex-Prisoner of War Memorial in Ballarat, \$10 000 to the Vietnam Veterans Association; and a \$5000 donation to the Anzac museum at Bullecourt in France.

In coordination and support, we have established a veterans unit in the Department for Victorian Communities. That is a new administrative unit established since the last time I was at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing. We have established new transport initiatives for veterans as well, including extending the free travel which was available on Anzac Day to also include the days before and after Anzac Day, and providing for veterans holding Department of Veterans Affairs gold or white cards who did not already have travel concessions to receive those same concessions on all V/Line and metropolitan transport services, the same as pension card holders.

We have conducted a review — and I know some members have been involved in this, too — of the Patriotic Funds Act, including consultations on the proposed Victorian veterans council which will be established. We provided \$50 000, in conjunction with the City of Melbourne, to support the annual Anzac Day activities; and \$100 000 to the Shrine of Remembrance to establish the business case for the redevelopment it is proposing of its galleries of remembrance.

That was for the last 12 months and I will finish now with our key priorities for 2005-06. First is the implementation of the veterans bill, which we seek to do, to establish the Victorian veterans council, which will provide advice to government on a wide range of issues relating to veterans, distributing, as has been done in the past, the Anzac Day proceeds for welfare purposes. Taking up a recommendation from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee examination, we will also establish a new veterans fund, which will effectively be made up of the proceeds that go to the Community Support Fund for 1 day out of 365 days in the year. The proceeds that would go to the Community Support Fund anyway for the one day, which represents Anzac Day, will be dedicated to commemoration and education as part of the new veterans fund. That will raise about \$250 000 a year and I think it will be a very useful dedicated fund to have as part of our ongoing commemoration. The bill will also improve the regulation of the patriotic funds.

There will be further development and expansion of commemoration and education activities including, we expect, the Spirit of Anzac Prize, which had its first year. Because of the enormous interest in that already, in not only the lead-up to the event but post the event, we expect that many, many schools throughout Victoria will be more heavily involved and it will be a much bigger exercise in selecting the student who will be going in the future. There will be an additional \$200 000 to broaden the Restoring Community War Memorials Grants program because of the demand and increased interest in that around the state. We will be supporting the Shrine of Remembrance education program through the provision of \$500 000 for a new education centre and \$1.1 million over four years for additional operating costs. We will be supporting key commemorative events: Anzac Day, VP Day and Remembrance Day in partnership with the Shrine of Remembrance and key ex-service organisations.

If I can just highlight that as a new area which has been consolidated in government. I am pleased to have responsibility for it and report to the committee on both the last 12 months and our plans ahead as well.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for that. We have allocated to the first half hour veterans affairs and multicultural affairs. The overheads on multicultural affairs are very clear and self-explanatory. Looking at the time, is there anything in particular in multicultural affairs that you wish to highlight or do you also think it is self-explanatory? If there are one or two points, that would be good. We do not have time to run through them all.

Mr BRACKS — I will not go through the whole lot; you can probably skip over them when I refer to matters. One of the new areas I want to highlight that has come up between now and the last time I presented before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee is the establishment of the Multicultural Victoria Act. That is something that I foreshadowed the last time I presented here. That is now in place through wide consultation which

was undertaken through an advisory committee. It has now gone through the Parliament, has been implemented and now proclaimed.

The other new area — I will not go through the other areas, which have already been reported on — is that as part of the budget estimates we have a new commitment to assisting refugees. That is probably the new area since the last budget. We have new money of \$3.5 million over four years, which will go to the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs to deliver as support package to assist high-need refugees in Victoria. This is a primary responsibility of the commonwealth, but there are some issues which the state needs to take account of, and we are probably leading the way in Australia in taking account of those, particularly access to education, access to health and access to universal services, which the state provides. We are also redirecting some money in Human Services on top of the \$3.5 million, which will give a total therefore of \$4.7 million over four years for three full-time and two part-time refugee health nurses, which will be funded through the Department of Human Services in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. As well as the assistance and support through new resources for settlement, for access to services for those people who are settling, we have also got health workers from existing DHS funds as well. So there is a total in this area of \$4.7 million, which will be administered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs as well. They are probably the two major things.

Mr FORWOOD — Sorry, can I just follow that through?

Mr BRACKS — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Human Services will send the money over?

Mr BRACKS — They will retain the money, but we will administer the program. It is always a hard thing to do between departments.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for that presentation on both multicultural and veterans affairs. My particular interest is in veterans affairs. I take you to what I think has been a really successful war memorials restoration program. You made reference to continuing that in the future. With the wisdom of the past 12 months is there anything that you think needs to be changed? Will there be changes in funding criteria or eligibility guidelines after the evaluation of the first 12 months?

Mr BRACKS — The biggest thing really is the enormous demand we have received for access to the fund. We started with a commitment of \$500 000, and we have increased that — it was announced in my absence I think on Anzac Day that we would be increasing that by a further \$200 000. That is the biggest issue. When you think about the war memorials and honour rolls across Victoria, there are something like 1100 existing war memorials and honour rolls around the state — that is, commemorative memorials and rolls which are in public institutions apart from those that are contained as civic memorials; they might be in schools, in hospitals and in other areas of the state. So there is an enormous demand there. Obviously there has not been an opportunity for a lot of these memorials and honour rolls to be upgraded in the past, and I am very pleased that we have introduced that.

We have provided small grants of up to \$7000 to restore, repair and protect those important assets, and we now have, as I mentioned, 79 applications which have been received. Those applications are currently being assessed, and we will be informing the successful and unsuccessful organisations of the outcome of that in June of this year when we have completed that. We have a panel. I might ask the secretary of the department to indicate who is on the panel. James, would you like to indicate who is assessing that on our behalf?

Mr MacISAAC — There is an internal panel, Premier, looking at the grants, and there will be consultation at the final stage of that process with the ex-service community represented by the RSL.

Mr BRACKS — Major General Dave McLachlan and the other people involved, yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Premier, we do not have a lot of time for questions. I wonder whether you would be prepared to entertain me writing some questions in relation to the output group on page 250 for \$7.8 million this year, because I have some detailed questions I would like to ask about how it is allocated, and whether you are comfortable about me putting a few questions in writing.

Mr BRACKS — Yes, sure.

Mr FORWOOD — Would that be okay?

Mr BRACKS — Yes, no worries at all.

Mr FORWOOD — Thanks very much.

The CHAIR — That is — —

Mr FORWOOD — I did that; we have such little time for questions.

Mr BRACKS — On this topic, yes.

The CHAIR — On this \$7.8 million?

Mr FORWOOD — Yes, I have a question.

The CHAIR — Okay.

Mr FORWOOD — Thank you. Premier, in relation to multicultural affairs, one of Victoria's great strengths is its multicultural community. There has been a long history of a bipartisan approach to multicultural affairs in this state, which has been very good for the state as well. I refer to the Victorian Multicultural Commission's awards for excellence, which was hosted by the Governor at the end of last year and attended by over 50 members of Victoria's multicultural community, including various ministers and the Chief Commissioner for Police. I wonder why, given the multicultural bipartisan approach, no Liberal members of Parliament were invited to the function.

Mr BRACKS — I will examine that for you, if you like. I have not got the details on the invitation list, but I am happy to take that up and examine it.

Mr FORWOOD — Thank you.

Mr BRACKS — I am just looking for the actual sheet.

Ms ROMANES — The inaugural Spirit of Anzac prize, being for the statewide schools competition and recent overseas study trip, has been a great success. You have indicated that this initiative will be supported again for the year 2005–06 in this budget. Is it likely to be ongoing commitment, is there likely to be an even greater response from schools, and how will selections be made for those who have the privilege to be involved in that?

Mr BRACKS — Thank you for your question. It will be an ongoing event. We have committed to at least 10 years in supporting this right across Victoria — in government and non-government school systems in every region of the state. We have picked nine as a number to select because there are nine education regions in the state. There seemed to be a logic in having a geographic base to it as well as a mix in the type of schools as well as the composition and make-up. It was very competitive in the first round. It was very hard to select. Nine were selected, and they ranged from Melbourne Girls Grammar, Benalla College, Sacred Heart College, Kyneton Secondary College, Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School, Horsham College, Mitchell Secondary College, MacRobertson Girls High School, Lalor Secondary College and Whitefriars College. So there was a big range across the state, and we expect that in the future as well. We also gave opportunity to some of those selected as finalists but not selected as one of the nine to go overseas to attend the Anzac Day lunch at the arts centre, which was an appropriate recognition of their interest and commitment in this area.

In 2004 there were 27 finalists selected from 158 entrants. And you are right, we expect and anticipate that there are going to be many, many more entries in the future as well. Following that interview process nine students were selected, and they travelled to England, Belgium and France. The independent selection panel — and we anticipate that this would continue in the future, because it was very effective — included Major General Jim Barry, who chaired it, and we had the RSL and other people involved in it as well. The students were also accompanied on their visit by a tour coordinator, John Coulson, by Kath Remer, a teacher chaperone from Robinvale Secondary College — Robinvale, of course, is the sister city to Villers Bretonneux; obviously there is a logic in having those connections and her involvement — Lachlan Lee, a teacher chaperone from the Mercy Regional College, Major General Dave McLachlan, the state president of the RSL, and Tony Charlton, the voice of veterans in Victoria, also went as did the parliamentary secretary assisting me as Premier in veterans affairs, Bruce Mildenhall. Of course the

composition on that tour will change — the students, of course, and some of the other organisations will nominate representatives on their behalf to attend in the future.

Interestingly when we were involved — and I was involved for part of the visit — we also met other students from other parts of Australia. Western Australia had a delegation there who went to the battlefields in the Somme and Villers Bretonneux and other places. There were also some students from Sydney as well at Gallipoli who were participating in that. I think it is a stunning way of acknowledging that the spirit of Anzac is alive and will be alive in the future through young peoples' commemoration and understanding of it. That is really what it was about. Yes, the last veteran from the Gallipoli campaign has died, but also we have a way in Victoria of groups of students understanding about the spirit of Anzac, writing about it, submitting on it, participating in it and reporting back as ambassadors of their schools and their community on their experiences. Everyone who was involved in this visit had nothing but praise for it. So yes, it will go on. Certainly I will be able to provide some reports to PAEC in the future on the success of the scheme and I know it is going to be very competitive in the future as well.

Mr CLARK — My question relates to the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act and to its objective of promoting racial and religious harmony in Victoria. Having regard to the disputes that have arisen in relation to the operation of the act since it came into operation, do you believe it is effectively achieving its objectives?

Mr BRACKS — Yes, I do. I think the act is appropriate and it reflects where public opinion is. It enshrines in legislation tolerance and respect for other races and religions. We were painstaking in our consultation on the act itself, and I think it has been a significant advance in Victoria to have legislation following public opinion and the public's expectations. I think it has, and I will not comment — it is not appropriate to comment — on matters that are subject to Supreme Court review, which they are, but that is part of what the act is about: having those matters considered appropriately through new legislation.

Ms GREEN — Premier, when I have visited the four sub-branches in my electorate I have had quite a bit of positive feedback about the free travel arrangements around Anzac Day. I am interested in how well veterans and war widows have taken up the free travel arrangements more broadly, across the state, around Anzac Day.

Mr BRACKS — Yes, we have introduced some new measures for the first time, and I think it is appropriate to report on that to PAEC. I thank you for your question. This year we had free travel, including Metcard and V/Line ticketed services, which we extended to the day before and the day after Anzac Day. For the first time that extended also to war widows, who had not had the opportunity of free travel, so not only veterans but their spouses also had that opportunity, and I know that was welcomed. We also offered free Anzac Day bus services for people who wanted to travel to the Anzac Day dawn service at the Shrine of Remembrance. There were some 50 local buses that travelled to the Anzac Day event from pick-up points around Melbourne. Members of the ADF, cadets, scouts, guides and school students received free travel and Metcard ticketed services as well because of their participation in Anzac Day. Feedback has been extremely positive. Could I add that Anzac Day 2005 had the largest attendance of any Anzac Day in living memory. It was estimated at 30 000 people, which is the highest in recent times. Also, effective from Anzac Day this year Victorian veterans who hold DVA gold or white cards are eligible for a new travel concession card, and that will be ongoing so that as well as the day before, during and after, there will be some ongoing benefits for all those DVA gold and white card holders.

Mr FORWOOD — Just a supplementary query, Premier. Do you know the total cost, and is it included in the output group 'Seniors and veterans'?

Mr BRACKS — Which output group are we looking at? What page?

Mr FORWOOD — Page 250 of the Victorian Communities section of budget paper 3.

Mr BRACKS — This is the actual funding of that travel arrangement?

Mr FORWOOD — Yes.

Mr BLACHER — It is funded through DOI, so it will be part of their budget.

Mr BRACKS — So it will come not in the DVC's budget but it will be transferred payment from DOI. It would have received an extra amount in the estimates as a result of the announcement, which will be in the DOI

budget, to cover that. So they will have to apply that to the franchise companies and the franchise companies can therefore offer that benefit.

Mr FORWOOD — So we should ask DOI how much?

Mr BRACKS — Yes, that is where it is, if you need to have an apportionment of that in the budget.

Mr FORWOOD — Thank you.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Premier, I would like to ask you about the commitment to the shrine. In your opening slides did you say it was \$100 000 that had been given to the shrine to — —

Mr BRACKS — For a business case.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — No, for operational funding due to the increased patronage?

Mr BRACKS — Oh, yes.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — This year — —

Mr BRACKS — Oh, no. Wait a moment, sorry. There are two parts to it, but please go on.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I thought you said it was \$100 000 for increased patronage last year; is that correct?

Mr BRACKS — Correct. There are two \$100 000 figures out here.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — This year you are boosting the operational funding to \$300 000 and for each of the next three years. Could you outline what that increase in funding is for, given that the patronage has been taken up? And also, administratively, is the shrine still with the Minister for Planning under the Shrine of Remembrance Act, or has it been transferred to veterans affairs?

Mr BRACKS — Yes.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — If it is still with the Minister for Planning would it be funded through the DVC?

Mr BRACKS — Yes, right, I will come to all those matters. Thank you for your question. All veterans affairs matters will be transferred to my ministerial responsibility, so it will be transferred. The operational control of the shrine will be transferred to the Department for Victorian Communities. The actual planning decisions will always be retained with the planning minister so the technical decisions about that —

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — The actual act? There is an act that establishes the trust. Will that become your responsibility?

Mr BRACKS — Yes, that comes over to my responsibility, yes, so that will transfer over. In relation to the other two parts of the question, the extra money, the recurrent money, is really to meet the extra demands. I mentioned that we have something like an 80 per cent increase in usage of the shrine, predominantly due to schools. That is now on the curriculum, if you like, of most primary and secondary schools, that at some point they will visit the shrine either as part of what they are doing in history or other parts of their education, and also as part of the spirit of Anzac issue again which is prevalent in all our school system. It is really meeting that demand which is a result of the successful first-stage development.

I am not sure whether members here have had an opportunity to see the undercroft of the shrine, the education exhibits and the medals that are displayed in the wall across the shrine itself, and some of the interactive educational facilities there. It is excellent, and therefore it has encouraged a whole lot of young people to attend. Also, a lot of tourists are coming too, more than were ever expected, people who are putting it on their list of places to visit. Because of that it is costing more to run and we are having to provide more for it, and that is what we have done as part of the last budget and this budget. But also — and that is why I got a bit confused initially — we have a further \$100 000 separate from that as a one-off which we are giving to the shrine trustees for a business case for the next stage. They have the proposal which they are examining for the next stage redevelopment which is further expansion, including car parking underneath and a range of other areas, to work up that business case. Just as we

did some three years ago for the existing development, we have given a further \$100 000 for that business case as well, and we would expect that would be complete by, I think — —

Mr BLACHER — November this year.

Mr BRACKS — About November this year. So that is for work between now and the end of this year.

Mr SOMYUREK — It is widely acknowledged in the community that the VMC grants have been a great success. What performance measures have been established to measure the success of the VMC community grants in achieving its objectives?

Mr BRACKS — Thank you for your question. The first point to make is that the VMC grants have expanded enormously. When we came to office the grants program was about \$750 000 per year. We have increased that to \$2.85 million since 2003–04, and that is the current level which we anticipate in the current financial year. The major funding round for this year's grant was open from 11 October to 3 December 2004. Those applicants will be announced by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Mr Pandazopoulos, who assists me in multicultural affairs, in the coming weeks. We have already assessed the round coming up. In the 2004–05 financial year to date there have been 2423 applications for VMC grants from 1587 organisations. So far, 1322 grants have been distributed to the value of about \$1.2 million. The number of festivals and events funded by the VMC has increased from 727 in 2003–04 to 917 now. That has also increased.

We have undertaken an evaluation of the effect of the grants and we believe some of the findings have been very positive. This evaluation was recommended, should I say, by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I think you asked me and recommended that that be undertaken. I cannot remember whether it was in session or whether it was a written communication. We have undertaken that evaluation and found that the community organisations receiving its grants view the commission as pivotal in community capacity-building — in fact, it is sometimes the only capacity they have to expand their club or for necessary and fundamental infrastructure; they do not have many other external funding sources, except sometimes local government — because of its role in supporting the aspirations of ethnic communities through collaborative processes. It also found that as a primary mechanism for funding ethnic community initiatives and programs the commission is perceived as a fundamentally important foundation and medium for building better and stronger communities and strengthening Victoria's diversities. These key findings are obviously important in assessing how we go forward and how we apply the funds in the future. I am very pleased that it has increased three-fold but also that we have an examination of what has occurred and it has been very positive.

Mr BAXTER — Premier, could you tell the committee what will be the mechanism for allocating funds from your new veterans fund?

Mr BRACKS — Principally, that will be through the veterans council which will be established, and that is part of what I mentioned in the description earlier on. It will have a specific role in supporting projects that educate people about or commemorate the service of Victorian veterans. The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee recommended using existing funds in the veterans sector for this purpose, but we recognise the ongoing welfare need for those funds and will not be moving any funds out of the welfare payments for that function. It will be additional funds. The Victorian Veterans Council will be provided with specific funding, the veterans fund, to promote and support education and commemoration. As I mentioned, it will be $\frac{1}{365}$ of the community support fund; about \$250 000 will be applied to it. The composition of that I will be submitting to Parliament as part of the legislation fairly soon.

Mr MERLINO — Premier, can you outline the specific responsibilities of DVC in relation to the refugee support package and the activities that will be undertaken by the department in 2005–06?

Mr BRACKS — This is a new initiative and the new funding, if you like, that the office has for the coming year. I mentioned in the preamble that it is \$4.7 million over four years, of which \$3.5 million is a new appropriation. The remainder is an allocation within the Department of Human Services which will be administered by the Department for Victorian Communities. Newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants face a range of problems, including educational difficulties, often due to disrupted schooling and language problems; dealing with the after-effects of torture in some cases; and having to deal with trauma, family displacement and cultural adjustment issues. Our package will target support to Victoria's recently-arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants by removing barriers to opportunities and providing assistance to access existing services. That will be the principal

role of the fund. It will empower refugees to increase their participation in the community and it will provide better coordination of service delivery to refugee and humanitarian entrants. It was part of our social policy statement *A Fairer Victoria* which is to provide fairer access to services for all Victorians, and this will be implemented principally by DVC, but also in partnership with DHS.

Going to the details of the package: briefly, it will consist of four full-time early-intervention refugee service-brokerage workers who will be located in high-need areas of metropolitan Melbourne; and two part-time positions located in regional Victoria. That will be essentially where the \$4.5 million is applied. Three full-time refugee health nurses will be based in community health centres in south-east Melbourne, in central metropolitan Melbourne, in north-west Melbourne and in two regional locations. I think this will be an important and timely intervention. Obviously we have a lot of recent humanitarian refugees who are settling here and of course we want to make sure that they can access the general services we have here as quickly and effectively as possible, whether that is in the school system, in health, or on our transport system.

The CHAIR — We are due to conclude this section at 2.05 p.m. I thank the departmental officers who have been in attendance. We appreciate that explanation from the Premier and others involved.

Witnesses withdrew.