

## CHAPTER 12: THE BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS AND GROWING VICTORIA TOGETHER

### Key findings of the Committee:

- 12.1 In total, 507 questions were raised during the 2008-09 estimates hearings. The Public Transport, Treasury and Health portfolios were questioned most extensively.
- 12.2 72% of all questions asked fell within 3 of the 5 *Growing Victoria Together* visions: these being Thriving Economy, Caring Communities and Vibrant Democracy. The remaining 28% of questions related to the Quality Health and Education and Healthy Environment *Growing Victoria Together* visions. This is consistent with the line of questioning taken during the 2007-08 estimates hearings.
- 12.3 The predominance of Thriving Economy questions focused on initiatives to increase train and tram services, and enhancing transport infrastructure (Public Transport Portfolio), while community safety and crime reduction were the main focus under the Caring Communities vision (Police and Emergency Services portfolio). Questions and discussion relating to the Vibrant Democracy vision focused on the clarification of specific financial data (Treasury portfolio).
- 12.4 While many questions raised during this year's hearings process were similar to those raised last year, the greatest number of questions were targeted at the portfolios receiving the greater share of funding in this year's budget.

### 12.1 Background

The Committee disclosed in its *Report on the 2008-09 Budget Estimates – Part One* and its *Report on the 2008-09 Budget Estimates – Part Two*, key matters raised at the estimates hearings and further information requested under each Ministerial portfolio. The Committee believes that it is useful to provide a link between the lines of inquiry adopted as part of the estimates hearings and the *Growing Victoria Together* visions and goals which balance social, economic, environmental, safety and accountability considerations and form the basis for budget and policy decisions.

### 12.2 Linkage of questions raised through the budget estimates hearings process with the government's policy vision and goals

Table 12.1 sets out on a portfolio basis a summary of the number of policy questions raised at the budget estimates hearings according to the policy vision and goals of the government.

**Table 12.1: Alignment of questions raised at budget estimates hearings with the government’s policy, vision and goals**

Portfolio	Growing Victoria Together policy: A vision for Victoria to 2010 and beyond										Total					
	Vision 1: Thriving economy		Vision 2: Quality health and education		Vision 3: Healthy environment		Vision 4: Caring communities		Vision 5: Vibrant democracy							
	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B						
Aboriginal Affairs			1							1					7	
Agriculture					9			2						4	1	16
Arts	6													1		7
Attorney-General								7						2		9
Children and Early Childhood Development			2	7							6			2		17
Community Development	1	1							5	1				4		12
Community Services			7						1					5		13
Consumer Affairs									8					1		9
Corrections									5		5					10
Education	1		1	15							1			7	1	26
Energy and Resources	1				7											11

**Table 12.1: Alignment of questions raised at budget estimates hearings with the government's policy, vision and goals (continued)**

Portfolio	Growing Victoria Together policy: A vision for Victoria to 2010 and beyond										Total	
	Vision 1: Thriving economy		Vision 2: Quality health and education		Vision 3: Healthy environment		Vision 4: Caring communities		Vision 5: Vibrant democracy			
	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B		
Environment and Climate Change					5	5			2			12
Finance, WorkCover and Transport Accident Commission			4				2	1	7			14
Gaming	1						5		1			7
Health			29						1			30
Housing						1		7	4			13
Industrial Relations	4						1	3				8
Industry and Trade	9								1			10
Information and Communication Technology	5								2			7
Innovation	2								3			5
Local Government	3						1		2			6
Major Projects	4						1		3			8

**Table 12.1: Alignment of questions raised at budget estimates hearings with the government’s policy, vision and goals (continued)**

Portfolio	Growing Victoria Together policy: A vision for Victoria to 2010 and beyond										Total
	Vision 1: Thriving economy Goal A: More quality jobs and thriving, innovative industries across Victoria Goal B: Growing and linking all of Victoria		Vision 2: Quality health and education Goal A: High quality, accessible health and community services Goal B: High quality education and training for lifelong learning		Vision 3: Healthy environment Goal A: Protecting the environment for future generations Goal B: Efficient use of natural resources		Vision 4: Caring communities Goal A: Building friendly, confident and safe communities Goal B: A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity		Vision 5: Vibrant democracy Goal A: Greater public participation and more accountable government Goal B: Sound financial management		
	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	
Mental Health			3				4		2		9
Multicultural Affairs	1						1	3			5
Parliamentary departments	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	9		15
Planning	3	8		3			3		1		18
Police and Emergency Services			2				17	2	1		22
Premier	3	1	1	3	4		1		11	2	26
Public Transport		25					4	1	4		34
Racing							3		1	1	5
Regional and Rural Development	5					1			2		8
Roads and Ports	1	11					2		2		16
Senior Victorians			1				3				4
Skills and Workforce Participation	2			5					1		8

**Table 12.1: Alignment of questions raised at budget estimates hearings with the government's policy, vision and goals (continued)**

Portfolio	Growing Victoria Together policy: A vision for Victoria to 2010 and beyond										Total
	Vision 1: Thriving economy Goal A: More quality jobs and thriving, innovative industries across Victoria Goal B: Growing and linking all of Victoria		Vision 2: Quality health and education Goal A: High quality, accessible health and community services Goal B: High quality education and training for lifelong learning		Vision 3: Healthy environment Goal A: Protecting the environment for future generations Goal B: Efficient use of natural resources		Vision 4: Caring communities Goal A: Building friendly, confident and safe communities Goal B: A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity		Vision 5: Vibrant democracy Goal A: Greater public participation and more accountable government Goal B: Sound financial management		
	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	Goal A	Goal B	
Small Business	6										6
Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs	4				5	1	2		2		12
Tourism and Major Events	8										8
Treasury	2	1	1	3	2	1	2	2	14	4	32
Veterans' Affairs			3				1				4
Water					8	3					11
Women's Affairs							7				7
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>507</b>
<b>Percentage of total</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Information compiled by Committee based on questions raised at the budget estimates hearings

### 12.2.1 Committee comment

In total, 507 questions were raised at the hearings this year. Table 12.2 identifies the portfolio's that received the highest number of questions from the Committee:

**Table 12.2: Questions raised during Budget Estimates Hearings (by portfolio)**

Portfolio	Number of questions raised at the 2008-09 Budget Estimates Hearings
Public Transport	34
Treasury	32
Health	30
Education	26
Premier	26
Police and Emergency Services	22
Planning	18
Children and Early Childhood Development	17
Roads and Ports	16
Agriculture	16
Parliamentary Departments	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Percent of Overall Total</b>	<b>49.7%</b>

While the lines of inquiry were broadly in line with the 2007-08 estimates hearings and the hearing duration for certain portfolios extended, the number of questions/issued raised at this year's estimates hearings overall was significantly lower than 2007-08 (507 questions in 2008-09 as compared to 689 questions raised in 2007-08). This is in part due to the Ministers providing more extensive and detailed responses to questions raised during this year's estimates hearings, and also due to an increased degree of complexity in questions asked by the Committee. The general policy of the Committee is to seek conciseness in the questions asked as well as in replies in order to ensure the best possible coverage of issues in estimates hearings.

### 12.2.2 GVT Visions

Of the 507 questions raised at this year's estimates hearings, the majority of questions fell within three of the five Growing Victoria Together visions:

- *Thriving Economy* (23.9% of all questions raised);
- *Caring Communities* (26.0% of all questions raised); and
- *Vibrant Democracy* (22.1% of all questions raised).

This is consistent with the line of questioning taken during last year's estimates hearings, and identifies the areas of the Growing Victoria Together strategy that are of particular importance to the community.

Within these GVT visions, the majority of questions were directed to the following portfolios:

- Public Transport – 34 questions were asked and 25 fell within the Thriving Economy vision. Questioning was centred around the acquisition of additional trains and trams to boost services, and enhancing transport infrastructure and asset maintenance;
- Treasury – 32 questions were asked and 18 fell within the Vibrant Democracy vision. Questioning was centred around the clarification of specific financial data in the budget, and the management of state debt; and
- Police and Emergency Services – 22 questions were asked and 19 fell within the Caring Communities vision. Questioning was centred around community safety and crime reduction.

During 2008-09 the majority of questions were directed to the Thriving Economy, Vibrant Democracy and Caring Communities GVT visions. Similar to last year, questions directed to the Thriving Economy and Caring Communities visions focused on enhancing transport infrastructure, initiatives to increase train and tram services, community safety, crime reduction and issues relating to Victoria Police. Questions on the Vibrant Democracy vision had more of a focus on the clarification of major infrastructure projects, and budget approaches to addressing social, economic and environmental challenges. The continued focus on train and tram services, and community safety and crime reduction illustrates that these issues are of continuing concern to the public and that the government is addressing these concerns via significant funding being provided to these portfolios in this year's budget.

Detailed comments pertaining to each of the five *Growing Victoria Together* areas and related goals are provided in chapters 13 to 17 of this report.