

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

(Extract from book 11)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

Professor DAVID de KRETZER, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry

Premier, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. J. M. Brumby, MP
Deputy Premier, Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. R. J. Hulls, MP
Treasurer, Minister for Information and Communication Technology, and Minister for Financial Services	The Hon. J. Lenders, MLC
Minister for Regional and Rural Development, and Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation	The Hon. J. M. Allan, MP
Minister for Health	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Minister for Community Development and Minister for Energy and Resources	The Hon. P. Batchelor, MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. R. G. Cameron, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Small Business	The Hon. J. Helper, MP
Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission, Minister for Water and Minister for Tourism and Major Events	The Hon. T. J. Holding, MP
Minister for Environment and Climate Change and Minister for Innovation	The Hon. G. W. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for the Arts	The Hon. L. J. Kosky, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. J. M. Madden, MLC
Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development and Minister for Women's Affairs	The Hon. M. V. Morand, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services and Minister for Senior Victorians	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Industry and Trade, and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MLC
Minister for Roads and Ports, and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Education	The Hon. B. J. Pike, MP
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. A. G. Robinson, MP
Minister for Housing, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr A. G. Lupton, MP

Legislative Assembly committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Carli, Mr Clark, Mr Delahunty, Mr Lupton, Mrs Maddigan, Dr Naphthine, Mr Nardella, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson.

Standing Orders Committee — The Speaker, Ms Barker, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Langdon, Mr McIntosh, Mr Nardella and Mrs Powell.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Batchelor, Mr Cameron, Mr Clark, Mr Holding, Mr Lupton, Mr McIntosh and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Jennings, Mr Lenders and Ms Pennicuik.

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Beattie, Mr Delahunty, Mrs Maddigan and Mr Morris. (*Council*): Mrs Coote, Mr Leane and Ms Mikakos.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr Crisp, Mr Lim and Ms Thomson. (*Council*): Mr Atkinson, Mr D. Davis and Mr Tee.

Education and Training Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Dr Harkness, Mr Herbert, Mr Howard and Mr Kotsiras. (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr and Mr Hall.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Campbell, Mr O'Brien, Mr Scott and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): Ms Broad, Mr P. Davis and Mr Somyurek.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Duncan, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Ingram, Ms Lobato, Mr Pandazopoulos and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mrs Petrovich and Mr Viney.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Kairouz, Mr Noonan, Mr Perera, Mrs Powell and Ms Wooldridge. (*Council*): Mr Finn and Mr Scheffer.

House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Delahunty, Mr Howard, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Scott and Mr K. Smith. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Atkinson, Ms Darveniza, Mr Drum, Mr Eideh and Ms Hartland.

Law Reform Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Donnellan, Mr Foley and Mrs Victoria. (*Council*): Mrs Kronberg and Mr Scheffer.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Green, Mr Hodgett, Mr Nardella, Mr Seitz and Mr K. Smith. (*Council*): Mr Elasmarr, Mr Guy and Ms Hartland.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Munt, Mr Noonan, Mr Scott, Mr Stensholt, Dr Sykes and Mr Wells. (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva, Ms Huppert, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Rich-Phillips.

Road Safety Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Eren, Mr Langdon, Mr Tilley, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller. (*Council*): Mr Koch and Mr Leane.

Rural and Regional Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Marshall and Mr Northe. (*Council*): Ms Darveniza, Mr Drum, Ms Lovell, Ms Tierney and Mr Vogels.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Mr Carli, Mr Jasper, Mr Languiller and Mr R. Smith. (*Council*): Mr Eideh, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Peulich and Ms Pulford.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

Council — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Speaker: The Hon. JENNY LINDELL

Deputy Speaker: Ms A. P. BARKER

Acting Speakers: Ms Beattie, Ms Campbell, Mr Eren, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Green, Dr Harkness, Mr Howard, Mr Ingram, Mr Jasper, Mr Kotsiras, Mr Languiller, Ms Munt, Mr Nardella, Mr Seitz, Mr K. Smith, Dr Sykes, Mr Stensholt and Mr Thompson

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. J. M. BRUMBY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. R. J. HULLS

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition:

Mr E. N. BAILLIEU

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. LOUISE ASHER

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. J. RYAN

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr P. L. WALSH

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	Lindell, Ms Jennifer Margaret	Carrum	ALP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Lobato, Ms Tamara Louise	Gembrook	ALP
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Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Morand, Ms Maxine Veronica	Mount Waverley	ALP
Bracks, Mr Stephen Phillip ¹	Williamstown	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
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Campbell, Ms Christine Mary	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Carli, Mr Carlo Domenico	Brunswick	ALP	Noonan, Wade Mathew ⁵	Williamstown	ALP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
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D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Tarneit	ALP
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Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
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Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
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Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Seitz, Mr George	Keilor	ALP
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Hardman, Mr Benedict Paul	Seymour	ALP	Smith, Mr Kenneth Maurice	Bass	LP
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Helper, Mr Jochen	Ripon	ALP	Stensholt, Mr Robert Einar	Burwood	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Eltham	ALP	Sykes, Dr William Everett	Benalla	Nats
Hodgett, Mr David John	Kilsyth	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Holding, Mr Timothy James	Lyndhurst	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
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Hudson, Mr Robert John	Bentleigh	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
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Ingram, Mr Craig	Gippsland East	Ind	Victoria, Mrs Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Jasper, Mr Kenneth Stephen	Murray Valley	Nats	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene ⁴	Kororoit	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Swan Hill	Nats
Kosky, Ms Lynne Janice	Altona	ALP	Weller, Mr Paul	Rodney	Nats
Kotsiras, Mr Nicholas	Bulleen	LP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Scoresby	LP
Langdon, Mr Craig Anthony Cuffe	Ivanhoe	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Doncaster	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Derrimut	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clayton	ALP			

¹ Resigned 6 August 2007

² Elected 15 September 2007

³ Resigned 2 June 2008

⁴ Elected 28 June 2008

⁵ Elected 15 September 2007

⁶ Resigned 6 August 2007

CONTENTS

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

TUESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2009

2023.	<i>Premier: I-view</i>	3107
2072.	<i>Premier: superannuation — employer contributions</i>	3107
2192(a).	<i>Premier: pensioner concessions.....</i>	3107

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

*Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.
Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Assembly.
Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.
The portfolio of the minister answering the question on notice starts each heading.*

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Premier: I-view

2023. Mr SMITH (*Warrandyte*) to ask the Premier —

Has the Department of Premier and Cabinet engaged the services of data collection agency I-view since 1 July 2007; if so, for what purposes.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet has not engaged the services of I-view during the time period in question.

Premier: superannuation — employer contributions

2072. Mr CRISP to ask the Premier —

What actions has the government taken to protect families from employers who do not make superannuation contributions on behalf of their employees.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Superannuation Guarantee, the policy requiring employers to make superannuation contributions on behalf of their employees, is a commonwealth government policy and is the responsibility of the Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Law, Senator the Hon Nick Sherry.

The Australian Tax Office administers the policy and provides guidance for individuals who believe that their employers are not making appropriate superannuation contributions on their behalf. In such cases, the individual is able to lodge an inquiry with the Australian Tax Office to take action on their behalf.

Alternatively, the Workplace Ombudsman is also able to help individuals if they have not received all of their workplace conditions and entitlements.

Premier: pensioner concessions

2192(a). Mr HODGETT to ask the Premier with reference to the concession discounts available on gas, water and electricity bills for concession card holders —

- (1) Did the minister instruct the water companies to remove the discount from being printed on water bills; if so, when.
- (2) When did the minister become aware that utility companies were ceasing to print discount information on bills.
- (3) Why were changes to the printing of discounts on bills introduced.

- (4) How is the government informing concession card holders of the changes to bills effective from 1 July 2009 that will result in the discount details no longer being printed.
- (5) How is the government informing concession card holders that, from 1 July 2009, the onus is on card holders to contact their utility company to provide their details in order to claim and pay the discounted amount on their bills.
- (6) What is the expected figure of eligible concession card holders not claiming their discount on utility bills.
- (7) What impact does the minister forecast the changes to the printing of discounts on bills to have on the state budget.
- (8) How much money does the government expect to save in the non-claiming of discounts on utility bills.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

- (1) Did the minister instruct the water companies to remove the discount from being printed on water bills; if so, when.**

No ministerial direction was issued to utility companies to change their bills.

The Department of Human Services, the department responsible for the management of the state concession program, has been working with utility companies since August 2008 to improve eligibility verification arrangements to ensure that only eligible people receive a concessions discount on their utility bills. The policy change developed through this process.

The objective was to develop a mechanism to prevent people whose concession eligibility has changed gaining access to concessions by presenting expired cards at point of payment. The preferred solution developed was to extend the current registration processes used to access municipal rates to other utilities. Many utility companies already used this process and the vast majority of concession cardholders already receive their concession through pre-registration with their utility provider. This process was to be adopted by all utility providers on 1 July 2009.

From 1 July 2009, the concession amount will only appear on issued bills if the customer has provided their concession details to their utility provider. This means that from 1 July 2009 customers will no longer be able to present a concession card at the counter to claim a concession. As a transition arrangement, utility bills which have both the full price and the concession price amounts printed on them can be paid at Australia Post outlets up until 1 October 2009.

- (2) When did the minister become aware that utility companies were ceasing to print discount information on bills.**

The bills of registered concession cardholders will continue to provide information on the value of the concession. The Minister for Community Services was briefed on the outcome of the improved verification project when she approved the communication strategy for the changes in March 2009.

- (3) Why were changes to the printing of discounts on bills introduced.**

The main purpose of the change is to ensure that only people who have a valid and current concession card receive a concession discount. Once customers have registered their concession details, utility providers will check their eligibility with Centrelink electronically before the bill is issued with the concession amount.

- (4) How is the government informing concession card holders of the changes to bills effective from 1 July 2009 that will result in the discount details no longer being printed.**

To ensure that all concessions card holders know about this change:

- Press advertisements have been placed in major metropolitan newspapers, regional and local papers, and various ethnic newspapers;
- Customer fact sheets have been distributed to Australia Post outlets;
- Messages about the change have been displayed on energy and water agency accounts and newsletters; and
- Brochures explaining the change have been sent out with utility bills.

(5) How is the government informing concession card holders that, from 1 July 2009, the onus is on card holders to contact their utility company to provide their details in order to claim and pay the discounted amount on their bills.

The vast majority of people who currently receive a concession discount from the Victorian government won't have to do anything at all to continue to receive their concession. Those concession card holders who have already registered their concession card details with their utility provider will continue to receive their concession discount.

Concession card holders who haven't registered their concession card details with their utility provider simply need to provide this information to their utility provider to ensure that they continue to receive a concession discount.

Even if customers haven't done this yet, they won't miss out on the concession discount. Utility providers are able to backdate concession discounts for up to three years. No eligible concession card holder will miss out on their concession discount as a result of this change.

The only people who are going to miss out on a concession discount as a result of this change are people who are ineligible for the concession.

(6) What is the expected figure of eligible concession card holders not claiming their discount on utility bills.

The number of eligible concessions card holders not claiming their concession on utility bills is not known.

According to page 237 of the *Victorian Utility Consumption Household Survey 2007*:

90 per cent of concession card holders were aware of the availability of concessions for the payment of gas bills;

95 per cent of concession card holders were aware of the availability of concessions for the payment of electricity bills; and

89 per cent of concession card holders were aware of the availability of concessions for the payment of water bills.

(7) What impact does the minister forecast the changes to the printing of discounts on bills to have on the state budget.

It is estimated that net savings from the introduction of new verification procedures will result in savings of approximately \$9.5 million in 2009–10, rising to around \$12.5 million in 2010–11. These savings are calculated based on the expected number of people currently claiming concessions when they are ineligible. Savings from this initiative will be reinvested in other concessions programs.

(8) How much money does the government expect to save in the non-claiming of discounts on utility bills.

Refer to question 7.

Overall, despite the potential savings from improved verification, the concessions to pensioners and beneficiaries budget is expected to increase to \$348.0 million in 2009–10, from a 2008–09 expected outcome of \$319.0 million.