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**FIRST SESSION**

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

**8, 9 and 10 April 2008**

**(Extract from book 4)**

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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, 8 April 2008**

**Murray River: police divers**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr Drum

**Raised on:** 5 February 2008

**REPLY:**

I concur that the drowning of a child in the Murray River on 3 February 2008, after falling from a houseboat, was tragic and that this will have affected many people. I do appreciate that in such circumstances, the recovery of the body becomes an important and urgent priority.

In this regard, the information contained in my letter to you of 23 July 2007 has not been superseded and is still relevant. In summary, this explains that immediately following an incident on the river, the most pressing priority is the rescue of any person or persons believed to be in the water. There is no restriction placed upon participation at this point, and any person at or nearby the scene may assist with the rescue. This is irrespective whether that person is a police officer, an emergency services volunteer or any other capable person; similarly, there is no distinction made whether this person is from Victoria or New South Wales (NSW).

However, once it becomes evident that the search has proceeded to the recovery of a deceased person, this becomes the responsibility of NSW Police. Therefore, only persons or groups authorised by NSW Police are able to participate in the search beyond this point. This restriction is necessary to ensure that evidence is secured and preserved for the Coroner. A co-operative arrangement between Victoria Police and NSW Police has been in place for some time and, resources permitting, Victoria Police regularly participates in these searches following a formal request from NSW.

In regard to the incident of 3 February 2008, I am advised that a number of persons assisted with the initial but unsuccessful search for the child at approximately 7 pm. There was no restriction placed upon any representative of the Echuca Volunteer Search and Rescue Squad assisting during this phase of the search. Once it was determined that a drowning had occurred, NSW Police sought the assistance of Victoria Police. Divers from Victoria Police subsequently travelled to the scene and recovered the body at approximately 10 am the following morning.

I am further advised that the assistance of the Echuca Volunteer Search and Rescue Squad was not sought by NSW with the recovery of the child's body. This is a matter for the NSW authorities and it would be inappropriate for me to comment regarding the reasons for this. However, I am able to confirm that a Service Agreement between Victoria and NSW to facilitate the deployment of appropriately trained divers for the recovery of bodies from the Murray River is being finalised. This should ensure that the recovery of bodies in the future is completed as quickly as possible and that all requirements are met.

**Mitsubishi Motors Australia: Adelaide plant**

**Raised with:** Industry and Trade

**Raised by:** Mr D. Davis

**Raised on:** 5 February 2008

**REPLY:**

During 2007 Mitsubishi made just under 11,000 cars at its Adelaide assembly plant. This number contrasts strongly with the 337,000 cars made collectively by Ford, GM Holden, Mitsubishi and Toyota (including cars for export). Mitsubishi's volume was just 3% of the total production. We expect that Mitsubishi's closure will have a small overall impact on component production in Victoria.

I therefore reject your assertions that "many will be affected by this", and that, "there will be an impact on the industry overall due to critical mass". These comments are nothing but scare-mongering and talking down the Industry for political purposes.

There may, of course, be a small number of component companies with a greater exposure than others and we will work with them to identify the impacts. Support will be provided as needed including the Skill Up program managed by the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) within the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD).

The Canberra-based Federation of Automotive Products Manufacturers (FAPM) has been monitoring its member companies to assess the number of component jobs that may be at risk and data on their Victorian component members is being provided to DIIRD on an ongoing basis.

**Aboriginals: Gateways to Justice calendar**

**Raised with:** Attorney-General

**Raised by:** Mr Finn

**Raised on:** 5 February 2008

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raise in the Adjournment Debate of 5 February 2008 regarding the Gateways to Justice Calendar.

The Gateways to Justice Calendar initiative, proposed by Indigenous Victorians under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement to promote employment opportunities within the public sector, is fully supported by the Government. This Government is proud to work in partnership with Indigenous Victorians under the umbrella of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

Since the Aboriginal Justice Agreement was signed in June 2000, Koori employment within the Department of Justice has grown from just 4 Koori staff to over sixty. This figure does not take into account the large numbers of elders and community members volunteering their time as bail justices and as members of Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees.

The individuals and initiatives featured in the 2008 calendar are great role models for the Koori community and celebrate the achievements of both individuals as well as community initiatives. The photographs show examples of what can be achieved through the strong partnerships between the Koori community and government. At a cost of a little over \$37,000 for production and postage, one half of a per cent of the budget for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, this is a commendable and worthy investment.

The calendar is circulated within the Department and throughout government to encourage other government departments to become more proactive in attracting Koories into their workforce. These calendars are also circulated to Koori organisations throughout the state, and in particular to secondary and tertiary educational institutions.

Through investment in the Gateways to Justice Calendar and other initiatives under the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, this government believes it can assist in addressing the reasons for Indigenous over-representation and create opportunities for lasting change.

**Wind energy: planning guidelines****Raised with: Planning****Raised by: Mr Hall****Raised on: 5 February 2008****REPLY:**

It is my understanding that a planning permit application for the proposed Berrybank wind farm has not been made to date. Once an application is lodged for a wind farm the planning process offers extensive opportunity for the views of the community to be taken into account.

The Department of Planning and Community Development monitors the operation of the *Policy and planning guidelines for the development of wind energy facilities in Victoria (2003)* (Guidelines) on an ongoing basis. I have asked that when the Guidelines are next updated, they describe where information can be obtained regarding current wind farm proposals including planning permit applications and decisions of the Minister for Planning on the need for an Environment Effects Statement.

I confirm that information regarding current wind farm proposals is available on the Department of Primary Industries web site and a web link to this site has been included on the Department of Planning and Community Development's planning website to assist intended land purchasers and others interested in these proposals.

**Duck hunting: season****Raised with: Environment and Climate Change****Raised by: Mr Hall****Raised on: 6 February 2008****REPLY:**

On 19 December 2007, I announced that the 2008 Victorian duck season would be cancelled due to the ongoing drought, which has resulted in limited habitat availability and historically low duck numbers across eastern Australia.

At the time the announcement was made, conditions for waterfowl were worse than those recorded for 2006, which led to the cancellation of the 2007 duck season. Conditions during 2007 produced the lowest wetland habitat availability and the second lowest index of game duck abundance recorded in the last 25 years.

Since that time, there has been widespread flooding in areas of northern New South Wales and Queensland. However, extensive areas of New South Wales and Victoria remain dry. Given this, it is highly unlikely that waterfowl will move into Victoria during the period when duck hunting can occur.

Further, it is considered that any improvement in environmental conditions would not allow eastern Australia's depleted waterfowl populations sufficient time to recover to allow hunting to occur this year.

Duck hunting will return to Victoria once conditions and waterfowl numbers sufficiently recover to allow sustainable hunting.

**Wodonga: hunting and firearms expo****Raised with: Police and Emergency Services****Raised by: Mr Barber**

**Raised on: 6 February 2008**

**REPLY:**

I refer to the Adjournment Debate matter in the Legislative Council dated 6 February 2008.

You have asked for assurances that all necessary permits were obtained, and all relevant laws complied with in the conduct of the Wodonga Hunting and Firearms Expo held on 9 and 10 February.

In particular, you sought assurance that all Victorian laws were complied with relating to the storage and sale of firearms at the event, and that there was an adequate police presence to ensure this compliance.

As you are aware, the Victorian Government is committed to the principles of the National Firearms Agreement and the National Handgun Control Agreement, and has enacted the principles of these agreements in the *Firearms Act 1996* (the Act). The Act establishes a rigorous licensing regime with respect to the acquisition, ownership and use of firearms.

I am advised by the Licensing Services Division of Victoria Police that all of the firearms dealers displaying firearms at the Expo had obtained the necessary dealer display permits under section 91 of the *Firearms Act*, and that these display permits were subject to stringent conditions regarding storage.

I understand that representatives of the Licensing Services Division of Victoria Police were present at the Wodonga Hunting and Firearms Expo, and two local Regional Firearms Officers also attended the Expo.

I am further advised that all of the other requirements of the Act, including those relating the issue of licences and permits, were met. Representatives of the Licensing Services Division accepted applications for licences and permits at the Expo, and these are being processed in accordance with the requirements of the *Firearms Act*.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your concerns.

### **Wallan Secondary College: funding**

**Raised with: Treasurer**

**Raised by: Mrs Petrovich**

**Raised on: 6 February 2008**

**REPLY:**

Since 1999, the Victorian Government has spent more than \$2.3 billion on capital investment in schools, including the renovation or rebuilding of 400 schools.

As part of that commitment, the Government has already allocated \$5.1 million in the 2004-05 Budget to complete Stage 1 at Wallan Secondary College, including classrooms, art, graphics, fabrics and administration facilities.

A further \$3 million was announced in 2005-06 for Stage 2. The scope of works included music, drama, home economics and science facilities. A further \$300,000 was allocated from the Community Facilities Fund to extend the drama facilities into community facilities to be shared by school and local community.

The Government is very proud of the facilities provided to date, with both stages of the school winning design awards at the annual School Design Awards.

The completion of the new school development at Wallan Secondary College has always been a high priority for the Government and planning for the third stage of the master plan development will include the gymnasium, library, additional classrooms and science and technology facilities.

The Government will continue to support the needs of Wallan Secondary College and all other school communities.

### **Schools: maintenance**

**Raised with: Education**

**Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips**

**Raised on: 7 February 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

Since 1999, the Victorian Government has invested over \$480 million in school maintenance and almost \$2.3 billion on capital investment in schools. The Government's Labor Financial Statement 2006 committed \$1.9 billion to renovate or rebuild a further 500 schools in four years as part of the broader long term vision for every government school to have been rebuilt or modernised by 2016-17.

The 2007-08 Budget delivered on more than one-quarter of the promised 500 schools, with 131 schools receiving funding to commence works.

Since 2005 the Government has also purchased 300 new relocatable classroom buildings with a commitment to purchase another 200 new relocatable buildings.

On an annual basis, \$41 million is allocated to schools each year for maintenance works. \$29 million is distributed to schools as a quarterly grant via the Student Resource Package to finance both planned maintenance and urgent or unplanned maintenance. The remaining \$12 million is used to supplement schools which experience an urgent maintenance issue that exceeds their available resources.

South Eastern Metropolitan Area schools have received more than \$51 million in maintenance funding since 1999 and continue to receive \$3.9 million each year via the Student Resource Package.

Any school experiencing an urgent maintenance issue which exceeds available funds can contact the relevant regional office to have the matter investigated.

The Government will continue to support the needs of schools within the South Eastern Metropolitan Area and all other school communities.

### **Police: St Kilda**

**Raised with: Police and Emergency Services**

**Raised by: Mrs Coote**

**Raised on: 7 February 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

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

The Government has invested considerable effort and resources to put in place anti-corruption measures. In 2004, the Government established the Office of Police Integrity (OPI). This independent office has investigatory powers equivalent to and in many ways greater than, those of any standing anti-corruption commission in Australia. This has strengthened the ability of Victoria Police to maintain high ethical standards.

Since its establishment, the OPI, in conjunction with the Ethical Standards Department (ESD) of Victoria Police, has been active and successful in tackling police corruption and illegal behaviour. The OPI works closely with the ESD, which uses skilled police investigators under the oversight of the independent, objective and impartial Office of Police Integrity. This has been demonstrated by the successful prosecution of a number of police officers for serious criminal offences. During 2006-07 OPI's activities resulted in 152 criminal charges being laid against police with 20 police and civilians facing criminal charges. In addition, six police officers tendered their resignation while under investigation.

The Director of OPI has wide powers, including the ability to conduct telecommunications intercepts and the authority to compel police officers to answer questions. He is also able to conduct his own investigations, including into the conduct of individual officers and police policies and procedures generally, and reports directly to Parliament.

The Government strongly supports the efforts of Chief Commissioner Nixon to address the problem of police corruption, and has equipped her with the necessary tools and resources. In this context, I am proud of the work done by the Victoria Police Ceja Taskforce, which has been successful in prosecuting corruption. The Taskforce has been instrumental in the charging of nine police members and six non-uniformed staff. Ultimately, seven police members were convicted, with six former drug squad officers receiving imprisonment sentences totalling over 46 years for their serious offences.

### **Planning: urban development program report**

**Raised with:** Planning

**Raised by:** Mr Guy

**Raised on:** 7 February 2008

#### **REPLY:**

The Urban Development Program (UDP) Annual Report is valued by the Government, councils and the development industry for its attention to detail on the supply, demand and adequacy of residential and industrial land in metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong.

As a result of strategic actions recommended in that UDP Annual Report the Government has provided assistance to councils in the growth area municipalities of Melton, Wyndham, Hume, Whittlesea, Casey and Cardinia for Precinct Structure Plans and other strategic planning assistance to increase the supply of zoned residential land. The Growth Areas Authority has been actively leading this effort.

The 2007 UDP Annual Report uses new 2006 Census and immigration data supplied by the Commonwealth Government. This information is used by the Department of Planning and Community Development to analyse demand for residential land, and produce projections on land available into the future.

The 2007 UDP Annual Report was released by the Premier on 4 March 2008 at the UDIA National Conference, and is available on the DPCD website at [www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/urbandevelopmentprogram](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/urbandevelopmentprogram).

### **Manufacturing industry: imported trains**

**Raised with:** Industry and Trade

**Raised by:** Mr D. Davis

**Raised on:** 7 February 2008

**REPLY:**

I am advised that the requirements of the Victorian Industry Participation Policy (VIPP) were correctly applied by the DOI when considering the tenders.

In this instance, the price of the trainsets with significant local content was considerably higher than the price being offered for the imported trainset.

I am advised that this differential was well outside the tolerance to allow VIPP to be applied.

The recent competitive tender for 18 new metropolitan trains was limited to ALSTOM and Siemens. These companies have built the most recent trains operating on Melbourne's network which have current approvals from the safety regulator. Limiting this tender process to those two suppliers ensured that the government could increase capacity and services for Melbourne commuters in the shortest possible timeframe.

Late last year ALSTOM was awarded the contract, which was announced at the time.

The additional 8 V'Locity carriages recently funded by the Government were added to an existing order with local manufacturer Bombardier for the same reasons, to ensure that regional train passengers will benefit from extra capacity as soon as possible.

On balance, the Government decided that providing Victorians with extra capacity on the metropolitan and regional train systems as soon as possible was the highest priority.

The Government is always seeking local manufacturing opportunities. To that end, I have asked the Industry Capability Network (ICN) to work with the successful tenderer ALSTOM to see if there are opportunities for local manufacturers to provide local content. Whilst the ALSTOM trains will be built overseas, stabling facilities, ongoing maintenance operations and train crews will produce local jobs.

I would also point out that the trainsets ordered by the previous Kennett Government made no provision for any local content. It was only by the action of this Government that any local content was applied to the previous trainset order.

**Housing: affordability**

**Raised with:** Planning

**Raised by:** Mr Eideh

**Raised on:** 7 February 2008

**REPLY:**

There are a range of factors that impact on the cost of housing and its affordability, including supply and demand, taxation and financial management measures, and the world economy. Planning is a component, but not the only one.

As Victoria's Minister for Planning, my focus is on ensuring that the planning system does everything it possibly can to effectively address housing affordability. Removing unnecessary delays in the planning system and ensuring an adequate supply of housing and land are the key things that the Government can control. An efficient planning system will increase well located housing supply, improve housing affordability, create and sustain vibrant liveable communities and ensure that Melbourne's urban growth is sustainable.

The Government's commitment to this was demonstrated by the announcement on 5 March by the Premier of Victoria of the establishment of the new Urban Growth Zone, which will effectively release all remaining developable greenfield land in our five growth corridors within the Urban Growth Boundary. The application of this new zone in growth areas will help speed up residential development and contribute to the Government maintaining a 10 year supply of zoned land.

This is the first step in new planning measure that will bring forward the development of land for housing. Other steps include replacing complex planning processes currently used in growth areas with new Precinct Structure Plans, with a stronger role for the Growth Areas Authority, in consultation with local government.

The new Planning and Environment Bill, proposed for 2009, will support a reduced regulatory burden by simplifying current laws, eliminating duplication, removing redundant provisions, modernising statutory language, and strengthening the certainty and timeliness of decision making.

The recent *Statement of Government Intentions* delivered by the Premier on 5 February, announced the establishment of an expert panel to review the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and report by the end of 2008. The Department of Planning and Community Development is developing a program for this review process and I will make an announcement once it has been finalised.

### **Automotive industry: national plan**

**Raised with:** Industry and Trade

**Raised by:** Ms Tierney

**Raised on:** 7 February 2008

#### **REPLY:**

The automotive industry is the centre-piece of Victoria's vibrant manufacturing sector and a focus for economic development by the Government.

The Government has had in place a Victorian Automotive Manufacturing Industry Strategic Plan since 2001. This document addresses a number of Strategic priorities and objectives for the industry, namely: People, Products, Processes, Policy, Positioning and Promotion. A suite of initiatives identified in the plan have been implemented in partnership with industry.

Given the rapid changes that have occurred recently in the automotive industry, I have instructed my Department to prepare an updated blueprint for development of the sector. Industry consultation on this initiative is currently in progress.

The Government will also be making a submission to the Review of the Australian Automotive Industry announced recently by the Federal Government.

### **Police: Olinda station**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr O'Donohue

**Raised on:** 7 February 2008

#### **REPLY:**

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 \$1.6 billion in 2007-08, and funded the construction and refurbishment of 149 police stations across the state.

The State Government invested \$1.4 million in the new Olinda Police Station to provide local police with state of the art facilities that better reflect the changing needs of modern policing. The community input into the design of the police station to suit the look and feel of Olinda also reflects a strong partnership between the local people and police, resulting in the best possible police facility for the area.

Reports of the Olinda Police Station permanently closing are unfounded. The station represents a significant investment by the Government in the Olinda area and builds on our commitment to provide police with the best facilities and equipment possible to enhance their ability to serve their local communities.

The level of policing in any area of Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective Regional Command Officers, with a view to maintaining optimum policing effectiveness. In an urban fringe area like Olinda where the fire danger is great, fire patrol duty forms an important part of local policing. One officer from the Olinda Police Station patrols Olinda and the surrounding area in this capacity. In addition, the senior officer at Olinda is currently on leave and will return shortly, boosting the police presence in the area.

The State Government's investment in police resources in the Olinda electorate is showing good results with the overall crime rate in Yarra Ranges dropping 24.1 per cent since 2000/2001. I congratulate local police for all their hard work in making the Olinda community even safer.

### **Council of Australian Governments: reforms**

**Raised with: Premier**

**Raised by: Mr Thornley**

**Raised on: 7 February 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

The Victorian Government has a strong record of driving national reform at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). This is demonstrated by our leadership in the development of gas and electricity markets, and more recently, our key role in the development of the National Reform Agenda.

On 20 December 2007, COAG agreed to a renewed comprehensive reform agenda which will drive reforms across a range of policy areas, including a commitment to tackle the key issues of climate change and water.

Under COAG, the Climate Change and Water Working Group has been established to develop reform proposals in these priority areas, complementing the Victorian Government's strategic priorities in water reform and emissions trading.

Emissions trading, including the development of a carbon market, offers the most cost-effective way of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. Victoria has played a pivotal role in the work of the National Emissions Trading Taskforce, with States' and Territories' commitment to an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and a national emissions reduction target driving a national response on this issue.

With the Commonwealth now committed to an ETS, the Victorian Government is working through COAG to ensure Victoria's interests are taken into account in the design of such a scheme, with due consideration of the impact on our gas and electricity sectors.

Ultimately, a well-designed ETS will help ensure that emissions reductions are consistent with continued strong economic growth.

Victoria, along with our neighbouring States, is also a leader in developing and establishing a water market. Trading of water within Victoria and interstate is generating immense benefits, revealing water's value and encouraging highest value use while becoming a major part of business strategies.

Through COAG, and at a state level, Victoria is working to ensure that water markets continue to operate efficiently and effectively, and act as an important mechanism to assist communities to adapt to the impacts of drought and ensure better use of a scarce resource.

Victoria will continue to play a leadership role in the development of reforms of national and State significance at COAG and I look forward to providing updates on progress in these priority areas as reforms are developed.

**Disability services: support program**

**Raised with:** Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

**Raised by:** Ms Pennicuik

**Raised on:** 27 February 2008

**REPLY:**

Information on the Program for Students with Disabilities is available in the Auditor-General's Report of September 2007.

Since this Government was elected in 1999, expenditure for students with additional learning needs has increased by 82 per cent.

In 2008, the Government is investing more than \$359 million in the Program for Students with a Disability including \$29 million in the Language Support Program.

Every Victorian government school now receives funding to support students with language difficulties.

In addition to the Program for Students with Disabilities and Language Support Program, \$50 million is being allocated in 2008 for a range of other support services such as psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers and occupational therapists to assist students with disabilities in all Victorian government schools.

**Weeds: control**

**Raised with:** Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 28 February 2008

**REPLY:**

To protect and enhance the biodiversity within our parks, the Government has committed \$5.0M per annum from 2006-07 as part of the Sustainable Management of Victoria's Parks Initiative. Of all the activities carried out by Parks Victoria staff, weeds are a very important priority; controlling weeds is at the very heart of maintaining a healthy park system for Victorians to enjoy, and we are continuing to attack priority pest weeds.

Parks Victoria treats almost 100,000 hectares of weed in parks annually, in programs focusing on protection of biodiversity values, threats to neighbouring land posed by weeds and pests, and targeting new and emerging weeds and pests in smaller parks bounded by non-native vegetation across the State. Blackberry is one of the most common species targeted in weed programs with 18,000 hectares treated across the State in 2006-07.

Blackberry is also one of the major weeds treated in the Alpine National Park; 2000 hectares of the Alpine National Park were treated for blackberry in 2006-07. Ongoing blackberry control works are targeted at boundaries with neighbours, small catchments or outlying sites disconnected from other infestations where eradication may be achievable, important sites for biodiversity conservation, such as spotted tree frog habitat, and visitor sites where camping and access to rivers is required.

In addition, the State Government's Weeds and Pests on Public Land initiative allowed blackberry rust fungus to be released at locations across the State including Germantown, Morses Creek and Buffalo Creek areas and Kiewa and Buckland Valleys. As you may be aware, the rust fungus is a biological control agent that targets a large number of the 40-plus types of blackberry currently growing in Victoria, without causing damage to other plants or animals.

**Dandenong Hospital: emergency department****Raised with: Health****Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips****Raised on: 28 February 2008****REPLY:**

I am able to advise that, since November 2006 when this commitment was announced, planning has been underway for the redevelopment of the Dandenong Hospital Emergency Department to be considered in the 2008-09 State Budget. This commitment will be considered alongside the other asset investment proposals for the 2008-09 Budget.

**National parks: management****Raised with: Environment and Climate Change****Raised by: Mr P. Davis****Raised on: 11 March 2008****REPLY:**

The Mitchell River Walking Track provides a semi-remote experience for visitors; a walk for visitors preferring less rugged and better signposted tracks is the nearby Den of Nargun walking track.

In September and October last year, the entire length of the Mitchell River walking track benefited from extensive works following the June 2007 flood and storm events. These works included track clearing, storm debris removal, erosion and drainage works.

The Mitchell River Walking Track from the Den of Nargun to Billygoat Bend is having routine maintenance works, including tree clearing, done now. No reports have been received recently from users, school groups or tour operators who regularly use the track and generally report back any issues.

I apologise that the signs for the Den of Nargun toilet facility were out of date. I am assured that the sign to the toilet is being relocated to a better position. In addition, the park note for the Mitchell River National Park is currently being reviewed and will include any necessary updates such as the reference to the toilet location.

With regards to signage in the Alpine National Park, as you are aware, in December 2006 and January 2007 the Great Divide fire swept through much of the high country burning over 1 million hectares and affecting hundreds of roads, walking tracks built assets, including signs.

The fire recovery program is well established, restoring safe visitor access through the progressive re-opening of many kilometres of roads and walking tracks and re-establishment of built assets. Hundreds of signs were burnt and are in the process of being assessed and replaced through the program. Given the scale of damage, works have been scheduled to be completed over a two year period. There has been, and continues to be, broad consultation on the scheduling of works to ensure we deal with key areas early in the program.

The area you describe near Mount Howitt was deep in the fire affected area. While the track was re-opened as a priority due to it being popular with walkers keen to get back into the area, the progressive ordering and placement of new signs has not yet occurred in that area. It is scheduled for after this winter snow season, and in the meantime rangers will continue to provide temporary signage.

The government has invested heavily in the fire recovery program which, along with built asset repair and replacement, includes weed and pest animal control, catchment protection and indigenous heritage survey and site protection work.

**Torquay and Lorne caravan parks: redevelopment**

**Raised with:** Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Ms Lovell

**Raised on:** 12 March 2008

**REPLY:**

The Victorian Government has delegated responsibility for the current and future management of the Lorne and Torquay Caravan Parks to the Great Ocean Road Coastal Committee. I do not propose to intervene in the committee's current process to consult with the community in relation to its proposed refurbishment plans.

I understand the committee has presented the refurbishment plans for the parks to its stakeholder communities and park users along the coast. In doing this the committee invited public comment on the proposals. The committee will re-consider its plans in light of the submitted comments and intends once again to consult with its stakeholder communities about the refurbishment proposals.

The committee is proposing to upgrade these caravan parks to ensure that appropriate facilities are available for visitors to the area into the future. The proposed upgrades aim to improve the amenities, provide enhanced environmental management and attain financial returns which will provide for improved coastal management. To achieve this, an integrated and comprehensive approach to the management of the caravan park is being taken and this will underpin the refurbishment proposal.

I believe the Great Ocean Road Committee of Management is demonstrating sensitivity to the needs of the local and broader community and are demonstrating their interest in accommodating community needs through its consultation process. There is every intention to retain these improved parks as affordable coastal camping grounds for the many visitors who travel to the Surf Coast each year.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Wednesday, 9 April 2008**

**Government: statement of intentions**

**Raised with: Premier**

**Raised by: Ms Broad**

**Raised on: 5 February 2008**

**REPLY:**

Farmers and the service sectors within agricultural industries play a vital role in minimising the impact of pests and diseases on our livestock, agricultural and horticultural industries.

Victoria has robust and contemporary biosecurity legislation and a clear commitment to the continuous improvement of that legislation. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) actively consulted with farmers and industry in the drafting of the legislation and will continue to do so.

I invite all farmers to become involved with industry organisations, through which they can be involved in the ongoing development of biosecurity measures for the protection of our agricultural and horticultural industries. The government regularly consults with industry groups, and relies on the expertise of farming organisations and their members, in such development processes.



**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Thursday, 10 April 2008**

**Equal Opportunity Act: review**

**Raised with:** Attorney-General

**Raised by:** Mr Tee

**Raised on:** 7 February 2008

**REPLY:**

I refer to your statement in Parliament on 7 February 2008 in relation to the review of the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (the Act).

In that statement you called for the Equal Opportunity Review to consider incorporating the best aspects of the equal opportunity regimes in other Australian and international jurisdictions. You also asked me to communicate with other States and Territories with a view to working towards national uniform standards for modern equal opportunity legislation, to the greatest possible extent.

I appointed Mr Julian Gardner in August 2007, to undertake an independent review of the Act. The Terms of Reference for the Review require any proposals for reform to take into consideration the different models for anti-discrimination legislation in Australian and relevant overseas jurisdictions. While there are many innovations in overseas jurisdictions, the Terms of Reference also require the Reviewer to bear in mind the Victorian context and government's aim to reduce the regulatory burden on business.

The Equal Opportunity Review Options Paper is due to be released in mid-March 2008. The Options Paper raises various options for reform to the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* for public consultation. Several of the options draw upon innovations in equal opportunity legislation in other Australian and international jurisdictions.

It is desirable for business and citizens to have uniform standards to the greatest possible extent, to provide certainty and consistency and to reduce the regulatory burden upon business. Clearer and consistent laws also help to improve compliance with the law and make the law more accessible for victims of discrimination.

At the March 2008 Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) meeting, Attorneys-General propose to discuss the possible harmonisation of anti-discrimination laws. The outcome of Mr Gardner's review, expected in June 2008, could inform any consideration of harmonisation of anti-discrimination laws by SCAG.

Thank you for raising these important issues.

