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WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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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, 10 June 2007

Crime: victims support

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Mr Kavanagh

Raised on: 6 February 2008

REPLY:

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of supporting victims of crime through the criminal justice process. We have introduced a number of significant reforms to ensure victims of crime are able to access a range of counselling, practical and financial supports. These include the reintroduction and increase in State funded compensation for pain and suffering after it was abolished by the Kennett Government and introducing legislation to establish a Victims' Charter which sets out obligations on criminal justice and victim service agencies in their dealings with victims of crime.

In Victoria, the Department of Justice funds and manages a network of rural, regional and metropolitan victim support services under the Victims Assistance & Counselling Program (VACP). They are designed to provide support to victims close to where they live and are staffed by paid professionals who provide a broad range of both counselling and practical support services. They also provide support throughout the criminal justice process, including support at court and assistance to prepare Victim Impact Statements. Where there is an identified need, VACP services also conduct support groups and one VACP in the metropolitan Southern Region has a well established and effective homicide support group which it commenced several years ago.

Victims of violent crime can also apply for assistance from the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal. Primary victims of crime can receive up to \$10,000 in Special Financial Assistance (pain and suffering payments). This is in addition to up to \$60,000 which can be awarded for counselling, medical expenses, loss of earnings and other expenses. Related victims of homicide are also eligible for payments from a pool of up to \$50,000.

The Office of Public Prosecutions in Victoria also has a Witness Assistance Service (WAS) which provides information and support to victims and related victims of indictable offences, including homicide, which are prosecuted by the Office of Public Prosecutions in the County and Supreme Courts. The WAS frequently works with the local VACP service, especially where the case is being heard in a regional centre, to ensure that victims are fully informed about the trial process and are well supported throughout the proceedings.

Thank you for raising this issue.

Planning: Mornington Peninsula

Raised with: Planning

Raised by: Mr Guy

Raised on: 10 April 2008

REPLY:

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council is responsible for the preparation and review of the Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council is currently preparing various strategic planning documents to vary its planning scheme.

The involvement of the community and stakeholders of the Mornington Peninsula in the preparation of these strategic planning studies and their implementation in the Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme is an integral component of planning and addressing local issues.

Crime: Geelong

Raised with: Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 16 April 2008

REPLY:

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

Since coming to office, the State Government has increased the number of police by over 1,400. Further, we have increased funding to Victoria Police to a record budget of more than \$1.75 billion in 2008-09, and funded the construction and refurbishment of over 150 police stations across the state.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing good results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 23.5 per cent since 2000-01, with Victoria now having the lowest crime rate in Australia.

However, the fight against crime is ongoing. That is why at the last election the Government committed to a further increase of 350 sworn police by 2010, as well as an additional 50 forensic and specialist investigators. In addition to this, the Government committed to providing additional resources and equipment to assist police in their work, including an extra 100 police cars.

Decisions on the placement of police throughout the state are operational matters and are made by police command on the basis of assessed need. It is important that this process is not subject to political interference. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner of Police that the level of policing across Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective Regional Command Officers, with a view to maintaining optimum policing effectiveness.

Victoria Police deploys first response police across its 56 Police Service Areas using a sophisticated resource allocation model incorporating 12 characteristics of the local community that are used to predict levels of crime and road trauma; the population of an area is just one of these. Victoria Police uses this model to ensure that police resources are distributed equitably and according to demonstrated operational need. It should be noted that, since 1999, the number of first response officers has increased in all police regions across Victoria.

You would be pleased to know that since 2000/01, crime in the Geelong Police Service Area has fallen by 33.1%.

Yarra Ranges National Park: rangers

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 16 April 2008

REPLY:

As you are aware, the Yarra Ranges National Park, comprising more than 77,000 ha of natural bushland, protects outstanding conservation, water resource and recreation values. Much of this park forms the catchment for Melbourne's water supply.

The 'upper Yarra' is a generally peaceful area of the Yarra Ranges National Park; however, as with many secluded bushland areas near cities, this area is occasionally targeted by individuals who conduct undesirable, or illegal, activities. I acknowledge that the Yarra Ranges National Park has, in the past, suffered from vandalism of public facilities and occasionally illegal deer hunting, but these incidents have generally been isolated, and of a minor nature.

The Upper Yarra Valley Park management area has sufficient four wheel drive vehicles and staff to service these issues. Along with key partners, Parks Victoria has been, and will continue to, effectively manage any issues that arise in the Yarra Ranges National Park.

Parks Victoria staff have developed an excellent working relationship with local Police and wildlife officers. Joint four wheel drive patrols and enforcement activities are regularly undertaken with Victoria Police and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Unfortunately, the type of activity you refer to is opportunistic, and very difficult to prevent, regardless of the amount of resources allocated, due to the large areas involved and the difficulties of being in the right place at the right time. By nature, deer hunting is secretive and hunters are difficult to locate.

Parks Victoria will continue to work closely with Victoria Police and the Department of Sustainability and Environment to ensure identified issues are responded to, managed, and impacts minimised. Should you have further information regarding specific activities occurring within the Yarra Ranges National Park, please provide this information to Parks Victoria so that it can continue to respond promptly to any issues that arise.

Solar energy: hot water systems

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 7 May 2008

REPLY:

The new regional solar hot water rebates program is aimed at regional and rural households to assist them to shift to solar when replacing their hot water system.

This initiative is particularly important for regional households that are reliant on electricity for hot water—these households have not been eligible under the current Victorian solar hot water rebate scheme. The new rebates program will address this gap.

The new rebates program will also significantly reduce the up front costs for households by offering rebates of up to \$2,500 for solar hot water systems, in addition to the value of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs).

It is anticipated that some 15,000 households in rural and regional Victoria will benefit from the rebate program over the period to end 2010/11. This will deliver ongoing benefits in terms of lower household energy bills and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Three issues have been raised by the Mr Davis with respect to:

- the timing for commencement and operation of the new solar hot water rebates program
- the level of rebate available from the Government and costs for households; and

- the program guidelines for applicants and industry.

With regard to the first issue, as noted in the Budget papers, funding for this program has been allocated over four years commencing in 2007-08. Work has already commenced on the development of the web-based application system that will be used to support industry delivery of the new rebates, industry consultations are also well underway and the first training programs for regional plumbers will commence in June. A major regional marketing program will also commence in June and rebates will be available from participating suppliers for systems installed from 14 June.

With respect to the level of rebates, the Government has committed to providing rebates of up to \$2,500. The level of the rebate and the level of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) will vary based on the system selected by the household. The actual cost paid by households for a solar hot water unit will also depend on the system they choose, noting that there is a large variation in prices from \$2,500 to over \$7,000 based on the type, size and performance of systems.

By way of example, the costs and level of rebate and RECs for three electric and gas-boosted solar systems from manufacturers that supply the volume market in Victoria would be as follows:

- For an electric boosted solar system, the full cost of a 300 litre, two collector solar electric system is around \$4,400. With the new Victorian rebate and RECs applied, the cost to the household would be in the range of \$660 to \$885, (depending on whether the system is installed in southern or northern Victoria). This compares with the current cost of between \$800 to \$1,100 for an electric hot water system.
- For a gas boosted solar system, the full cost of a 215 litre system with two collectors and an in-line booster is around \$4,715. The cost to the household installing this system with the rebate and RECs applied would be between \$750 to \$1,065. This compares to a fully installed cost of \$1,200 to \$1,600 for a conventional gas hot water system.
- The full cost of a smaller 175 litre gas boosted solar system with two collectors (suitable for a household of 3-4 people) is around \$4130. The cost to the household installing this system with the rebate and RECs applied would be between \$500 to \$680. This compares to a fully installed cost of \$1,000 to \$1,400 for a conventional gas system of the same size.

It should be noted that the design of the rebates program, including the value of rebates to be applied to each solar hot water system, is currently under development.