

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
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**FIRST SESSION**

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

**24 and 26 June 2008**

**(Extract from book 9)**

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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, 24 June 2008**

**Family violence: legislation**

**Raised with:** Women's Affairs

**Raised by:** Mr Scheffer

**Raised on:** 7 February 2008

**REPLY:**

The Brumby Government is committed to tackling family violence and that is why we have agreed to reform the laws relating to intervention orders to ensure that victims of family violence are better protected and the perpetrators are held to account for their actions.

The proposed Family Violence Bill is being developed in response to recommendations made by the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) in its Review of Family Violence Report. This report was based on extensive community consultation by the VLRC across Victoria over a two-year period.

The Department of Justice has undertaken extensive consultation with key stakeholders on the form and scope of the new Family Violence Bill announced in the Premier's statement of legislative intent. A number of forums have been held to explore the best way to implement recommendations. Many organisations have made submissions about the content of the Bill and participated in the forums. These organisations include No To Violence; the Federation of Community Legal Centres; Women's Legal Service Victoria, Domestic Violence Victoria and the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre. Further consultation will take place as the Bill nears introduction.

The Brumby Government is also exploring ways in which the community can be further educated about the nature of family violence and its unacceptability. The introduction of new legislation will provide an ideal way to highlight the problem of family violence and enable the justice system and the community to support and build consistent and shared understandings of the nature of family violence.

**Youth: alcohol abuse**

**Raised with:** Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

**Raised by:** Mr Drum

**Raised on:** 26 February 2008

**REPLY:**

In late 2007, the Premier declared that alcohol is the biggest social issue facing Victoria and one of the biggest threats to young Victorians. The Victorian Government is committed to preventing and reducing alcohol misuse among young people, so I thank the member for the question and his keen interest in the matter.

I agree with the Member that under-age drinking and binge drinking are serious and pertinent issues that require a strong understanding of issues around young people and alcohol, and a co-ordinated, strategic response. In this regard two important projects are already in progress.

In December 2007 the Victorian Drug and Alcohol Prevention Council was created to assist the government in relation to the prevention of binge drinking. Specific assistance is being provided in relation to:

- identifying best practice in preventing alcohol bingeing;
- achieving the right balance between regulation and prevention;
- enabling effective responses to immediate threats to public safety;
- identifying clearer roles for schools and youth organisations in equipping young people with strategies to say no;
- requiring cafes and restaurants that operate as bars or nightclubs late into the night to have appropriate security;
- encouraging greater awareness of the differential alcohol content of products; and better support and guidelines for parents who host parties for young people.

This advice has been incorporated into a Whole of Government alcohol strategy. '*Restoring the balance*' the Victorian Alcohol Action Plan 2008 -2013 (VAAP) outlines the Victorian Government's commitment to preventing and reducing harm associated with alcohol misuse in Victoria. '*Restoring the balance*' provides a vision for long term change and identifies clear priorities for action. These priorities are in four key areas:

- families—including more support for mainstream health services to help people reduce their drinking early;
- culture—which includes promoting safe and sensible alcohol use through community awareness campaigns and education in schools;
- community—enforcing controls on the sale and marketing of alcohol, particularly to young people; and preventing and reducing the consequences of alcohol- fuelled violence ;
- partnerships with the Commonwealth and other governments to ensure a consistent approach.

In the recent State Budget, the Government announced that \$4.3 million dollars would be made available to increase community awareness about the consequences of risky drinking and to encourage responsible drinking.

In addition the Government is piloting the introduction of an early morning (2 am) lock out in bars, pubs and clubs, aimed at discouraging binge drinking, pub crawling and alcohol related violence in the inner city where many young people congregate. The initiative will be trialled over a three month period.

The Office for Youth also funds a range of programs which effectively communicate with and support young people and reinforce the Government's key prevention and harm minimisation messages in relation to alcohol misuse.

The Schoolies Week Interagency Steering Committee (SWISC) has developed communication material to promote harm minimisation messages to young school leavers, and information for safer schoolies week celebrations is promoted on the Victorian Government's *youthcentral* website.

*FReeZA events* are alcohol free and organised by committees of young people who emphasise the fun you can have at an event where there is no alcohol or drugs. In 2007 over 145 000 young people attended 450 *FReeZA* events, all of which are promoted as being drug, alcohol and smoke free. These events are all planned and staged by a local committee of young people.

In 2008-2009, 78 local government and community organisations will again receive grants to deliver the *FReeZA* program across Victoria, giving young people access to alcohol and drug free entertainment and youth cultural events in 72 local government areas.

I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues across government to ensure the strategies and programs outlined above have maximum positive impact and minimise harm from alcohol use to young people across Victoria.

### **K Road, Werribee: cliff fencing**

**Raised with:** Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr Finn

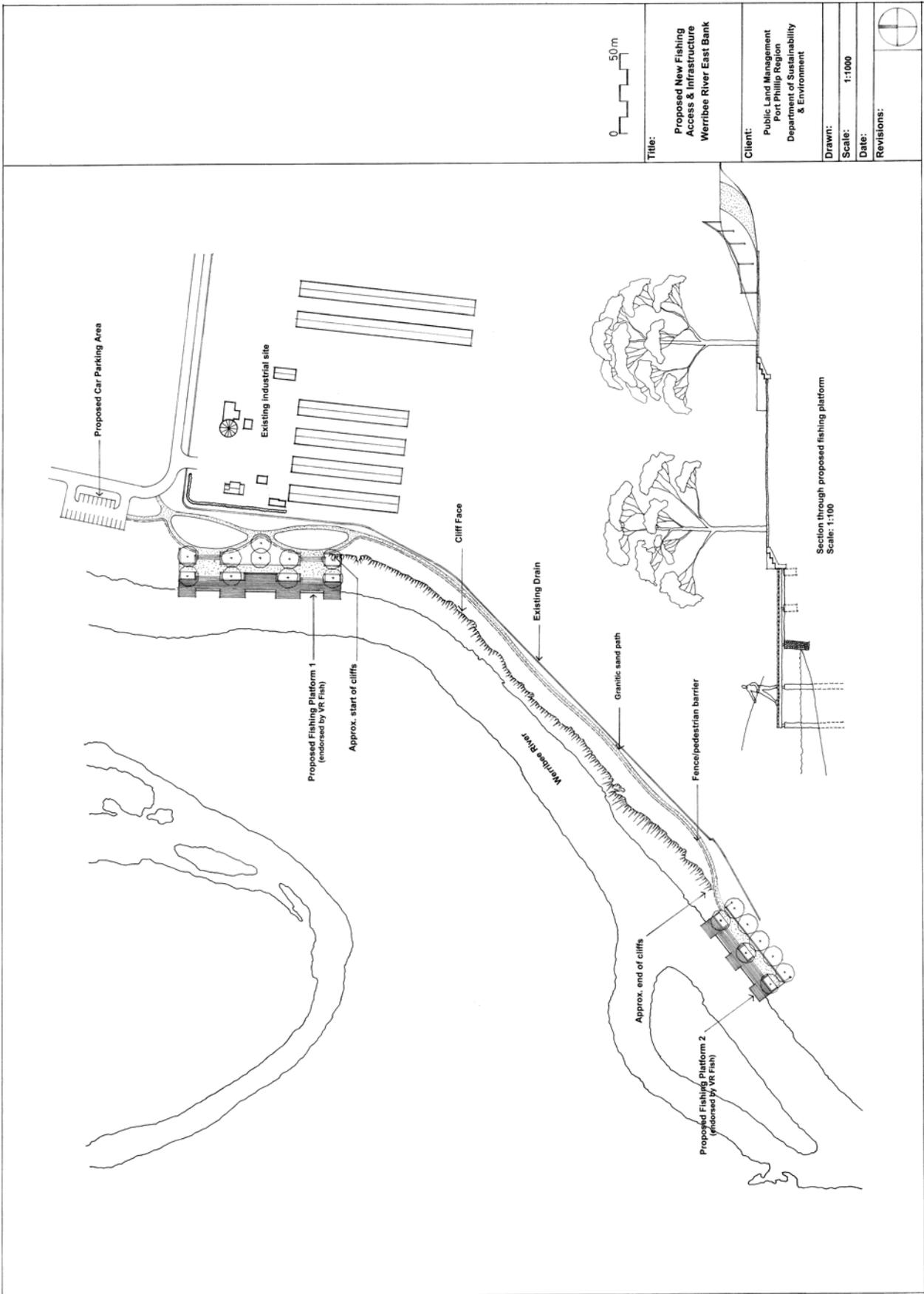
**Raised on:** 8 April 2008

#### **REPLY:**

The Department of Sustainability and Environment has taken action to address the potential risk posed to the public by the unstable K Road cliffs. The Department in partnership with the City of Wyndham has installed “no entry” and “unstable cliffs” signs and erected additional fencing to restrict access to the cliffs.

The Department is taking a holistic approach to the issue of access to K Road cliffs. Officers are working closely with Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and VR Fish to provide safe and sustainable access to the Werribee River for the public and recreational fishers. To facilitate this access, the Department, in partnership with VR Fish, is currently developing a concept plan for access to two new fishing areas immediately south of the K Road cliffs with a view to directing recreational anglers away from the cliffs (refer to map provided).

The Department regards the management of K Road cliffs and adjoining Crown land as a high priority and is working with Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and Wyndham City Council to implement a long term management arrangement that addresses potential risks to public safety posed by the cliffs whilst enhancing the environmental and community values of the area.



**Croajingolong National Park: Narrows walking track**

**Raised with:** Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 16 April 2008

**REPLY:**

The 7 kilometre, 2-3 hour return Mallacoota Walking Track crosses multiple land tenures, and is managed in partnership with the Friends of Mallacoota, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, East Gippsland Shire Council and Parks Victoria. Some 3.9 kilometres of this walk is on land managed by Parks Victoria in the Mallacoota Coastal Reserve, Shady Gully Bushland Reserve and Mortirners Paddock Bushland Reserve. Parks Victoria appreciates your recognition of the value and condition of the track.

Parks Victoria has recently inspected the Narrows Walking Track from Buckland's Jetty to Captain Creek Jetty and removed small trees and branches, comprising one obstruction and six partial obstructions. Trees and limbs do occasionally block tracks of this type, usually due to weather events, and are removed as part of regular maintenance works.

A damaged sign along this walking track has also been identified, and will be replaced in the coming months as part of the annual production of new and replacement signs. The Parks Victoria office in Mallacoota is currently staffed for public inquiries on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. However, a planned change in staffing arrangements will soon mean the office is open five days a week for shorter daily hours. The opening hours are posted outside the front door.

I apologise that there was no one in attendance on 3 April when you visited. Unfortunately the Mallacoota Office was closed to the public on that day due to extenuating circumstances. The officer who was rostered to provide public contact was away, and was unable to be replaced on short notice due to staff engagement at a prescribed burn near Cann River, and maintenance activities at Wingan Inlet. However, the office phone is covered by an answering service when; unattended, and had you left a message Parks Victoria would have been able to respond promptly.

**Bannockburn: community hub**

**Raised with:** Community Development

**Raised by:** Ms Pulford

**Raised on:** 16 April 2008

**REPLY:**

A grant of \$300,000 was recently approved through the Victorian Community Support Grants program towards the Bannockburn Community and Cultural Hub development project.

A letter has been sent to Golden Plains Shire Council notifying them of this funding outcome.

Bannockburn is the fastest growing town in Golden Plains Shire, and the Shire has identified the need for new facilities to meet increasing demand.

Thanks to this funding, the Bannockburn public hall will be transformed into a 200-seat multipurpose space designed for performing arts, cinema and events.

A new community learning and neighbourhood centre will be built next to the hall, providing space for youth programs and activities, adult learning programs, community meetings, consultation rooms and 'hot desk' facilities for local community groups.

The project will make a valuable contribution to Bannockburn and surrounding areas by facilitating a variety of social, recreational and cultural activities.

I thank you for raising this matter in the adjournment debate on April 16 2008, and for your advocacy of the needs of the Bannockburn community. The work of yourself and your colleague, the Hon Gayle Tierney MLC, Member for Western Victoria, has been crucial in ensuring that the Golden Plains Shire is able to meet the needs of Bannockburn's growing population.

### **Nepean Highway–Bay Road, Cheltenham: red light camera**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 17 April 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Since the camera's installation, regular servicing and testing has been conducted by independent external technical contractors on this site and no incidents of inaccuracy or inappropriate operation have been detected. The camera is certified under the provisions of the *Road Safety Act 1986*.

The Department of Justice advises that regular servicing and testing is conducted at all fixed digital camera sites around Victoria as part of a rigorous maintenance program.

### **Water: Wimmera–Mallee pipeline**

**Raised with:** Water

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 7 May 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Since November 2005, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (GWMWater) has had a policy that: "Lands that are currently within the channel supply system and within the designed (Wimmera Mallee) pipeline network are to be automatically classified and rated as a property capable of being supplied".

Water Supply System 6 is within the proposed pipeline network. I am aware that the property owners you represent in your question are concerned that the pipeline may lead to their land being reclassified and rated.

Although these land-holders are not represented on GWMWater consultative committees, GWMWater has actively consulted them about this and other issues. These land-holders made submissions to several consultative committees, which have brought the matter to the attention of the GWMWater Board. Also, a series of public meetings were held in the area earlier this year, and four of the land-holders have met with senior GWMWater staff. GWMWater plans to consult the land-holders individually in July.

Under the Water Act, GWMWater is required to 'integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations'. GWMWater is considering the interests of all land-holders in the region, and the most appropriate and equitable cost sharing arrangements for the pipeline.

Consultation is continuing with the property owners. GWMWater will consider the outcomes from this consultation in light of the interests of all land-holders in the region, and advise the Supply System 6 land-holders of its decision.

I note your reference to the "Government's poor management of its water assets" and I reject it entirely. This Government has made substantial investment in rural and regional water infrastructure to strengthen the long-term viability and prosperity of regional communities. Within Western Victoria, these investments include:

- \$30 million for the Hamilton-Grampians pipeline.
- \$70 million for the Goldfields Superpipe providing water to Ballarat and Bendigo.
- \$20 million for the Melbourne-Geelong pipeline.
- \$266 million for the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.

These investments have been designed as an integrated package to provide Victorians with water security in the face of drought and climate change.

### **Mount Hotham: airline services**

**Raised with:** Tourism and Major Events

**Raised by:** Mr Hall

**Raised on:** 8 May 2008

#### **REPLY:**

The Victorian Government is disappointed by QantasLink's decision to suspend scheduled services for the 2008 ski season. However, I am advised that it has been made in the context of a world-wide pilot shortage created by unprecedented growth in the global airline industry.

This situation is not unique to Victoria. Services across Australia are being affected as regional airlines lose experienced pilots to the larger airlines, which are expanding to meet domestic and international demand.

Regional Express currently operates Saab aircraft, which are unsuitable for commercial services into Mt Hotham airport. In addition, Regional Express is also affected by the pilot shortage, and has recently withdrawn its service between Sydney and Cooma in the Snowy Mountains as well as reducing flights on the routes from Mount Gambier to Melbourne and Adelaide, Melbourne to Mildura, Melbourne to Albury and Sydney to Griffith.

QantasLink has indicated an intention to resume its seasonal service to Mt Hotham for the 2009 ski season, and is currently working to provide connections to Mt Hotham from Albury Airport for the five per cent of ski-season visitors who fly in.

The Victorian Government will continue to work with other carriers to encourage increased air services to the Mt Hotham region. The Government is also committed to working with the industry on the pilot shortage issue and has commissioned a review of aviation training in Victoria to help meet the needs of the domestic and international airline industries as they grow.

### **Road safety: speed cameras**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr Dalla-Riva

**Raised on:** 8 May 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Victoria Police's placement of speed or red light cameras is influenced by accident statistics and other risks factors, in consultation with VicRoads, Community Road Safety Councils, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and the Department of Justice. In addition, some new roads such as EastLink have cameras placed on them because

past experience with similar high quality roads has indicated a significant level of risk of casualty crashes in the event of speeding.

Contrary to your suggestion, there is no covert road safety cameras policy in Victoria. All fixed and mobile camera sites are freely available on the Department of Justice website [www.justice.vic.gov.au/roadsafety](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/roadsafety).

There is a general policy of placing signs where fixed cameras operate, for example the entries to EastLink will indicate the presence of road safety cameras in operation.

In the case of mobile cameras the 'Mobile Speed Camera Policy & Operations Manual', which is also freely available on the Department of Justice website, indicates that although the cameras are not signed they are not deliberately hidden. There is, therefore no deliberate "covert" detection in Victoria.

Using both signed and unsigned cameras achieves substantial reductions in excessive speeds and casualty rates across the whole system. Not knowing if a camera is around the corner when entering a suburb is a reason to take the foot off the accelerator and stick to the speed limit. Less speed means fewer deaths on Victorian roads.

The Monash University Accident Research Centre has undertaken a number of research projects on the impact of Victoria's road safety camera programs. The evaluations show that speed cameras do in fact offer a successful means of countering the negative effects of speeding.

Findings were that the use of road safety cameras to address specific areas in which casualty crash frequency or excessive speed is high is a cost effective means of reducing both casualty crashes and average speeds around the camera sites. Further findings were that Victoria's mobile road safety camera program achieves substantial reductions in excessive speeds and casualty crashes across the whole road system, not just at the specific locations at which fixed cameras are operated.

### **Stonnington and Port Phillip: clearways**

**Raised with:** Premier

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 8 May 2008

#### **REPLY:**

The Government is committed to addressing congestion to minimise its impact on Melbourne's livability and prosperity. I announced a number of short-term measures to ease congestion in the *Keeping Melbourne Moving* plan. The plan includes a number of measures to address congestion, including expanding VicRoads' Rapid Response Service, a targeted tram and bus priority program, investment in walking and cycling infrastructure, providing better information to commuters and extending and standardising clearway times on arterial roads and key public transport routes.

This package follows a round table I held earlier this year with a number of community and industry leaders. Improving the operation of clearways was one of the ideas raised at the round table. An extension of clearway times is estimated to benefit more than 300,000 tram and bus passengers in Melbourne every day. Improved travel time and reliability for trams and buses will help encourage more people to use them, helping take pressure off the roads.

The Government is continuing to consult with stakeholders on congestion as a broad issue, and to discuss the implementation of the clearways policy specifically. A Clearways Implementation Reference Group will be established, including peak body representatives from local government, the business community and other key stakeholders. Meetings are also being held with a range of stakeholders, including the Cities of Stonnington and Port Phillip.

**Regional and rural Victoria: event planning****Raised with:** Community Development**Raised by:** Ms Tierney**Raised on:** 27 May 2008**REPLY:**

Local councils and the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) Regional Teams are useful resources for community members interested in planning local events.

Local councils play an important role in providing recreation and cultural services to local communities as organiser or working with local communities to plan events and activities. Local councils are a useful source of information and advice, particularly as operators of recreation or cultural facilities. Community members interested in planning local events should be encouraged to contact their local council. By doing this, local councils can advise them on issues of relevance to the proposed event and any implication on infrastructure.

DPCD Regional Teams, strategically placed across regional Victoria, help facilitate partnerships across government and local communities as part of their role. They can also offer assistance in increasing community involvement in local priorities, creating new partnerships and effective governance, and providing access to information on government programs, services and grants.

Local councils and the DPCD Regional Teams work in close partnership on a range of regional priorities and activities. They should be the first point of contact as they carry the repository of local knowledge of events and activities including networks that can help inform local event planning.

The Government strongly supports local community events as they provide the opportunity to highlight unique local attractions as well as building community pride.

**Ambulance services: Altona North****Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services**Raised by:** Ms Hartland**Raised on:** 27 May 2008**REPLY:**

Matters relating to ambulances are the responsibility of the Minister for Health.



**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Thursday, 26 June 2008**

**Disability services: supported accommodation**

**Raised with:** Community Services

**Raised by:** Mr O'Donohue

**Raised on:** 7 May 2008

**REPLY:**

To meet unmet demand for disability support, the Brumby Labor Government's 2008-09 State Budget included a \$233.4 million funding package which represents the single biggest investment in disability services in Victorian history. Funding focuses on improving access to accommodation, expanding and reforming respite services, more aids and equipment and greater access to individual support packages.

The government is supporting many innovative accommodation initiatives. In the region in which Frankston/Peninsula Carers' Inc is based more than 50 additional housing opportunities are being created for people with a disability as a result of investment in new and redeveloped facilities, initiatives such as *Neighbourhood Connections* and *HomeShare* and collaborative projects with the Disability Housing Trust (now Housing Choices Australia) and housing associations. The growth in individual support packages is also allowing many people with disabilities to live more independently in the community.

I am advised that senior staff from the Department of Human Services have previously met with representatives of the Frankston/Peninsula Carers' Inc to discuss their proposal to acquire land and build new accommodation. I understand a further meeting is planned to consider how to best address the support needs of the individuals concerned.

**Dental services: denture scheme**

**Raised with:** Health

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 27 May 2008

**REPLY:**

The Government acknowledges the importance and values the contribution of Victoria's private prosthetists in providing services to concession card holders through the Victorian Denture Scheme.

Victoria, along with New South Wales and South Australia, is one of the three of the six states which does not match the Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) rates in their various dental voucher schemes. Of the other three states, Western Australia and Tasmania do so by requiring their public dental clients to contribute higher co-payments than is the case in Victoria.

I have asked the Department of Human Services to prepare a paper on issues relating to the difference between fees paid to private dental practitioners under the Dental Health Program and the dental fees schedule set by DVA. The paper will take into consideration the concerns of the Australian Dental Prosthetists' Association (Victoria).

**Community health centres: tax ruling**

**Raised with:** Health

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 28 May 2008

**REPLY:**

Community Health Centres (CHCs) in Victoria are a major vehicle for the delivery of a wide range of state funded, community based health and human services.

This government has determined to undertake a review of CHC governance and accountability. The decision to undertake a review recognises that the role of CHCs in the health service system has changed over time and that the provisions of the Health Services Act 1988 which may have once been appropriate may no longer represent an appropriate framework.

In relation to the ATOs findings, this government considers a regulatory regime should be established which enables CHCs to maintain their status as charities or public benevolent institutions while balanced with the simultaneous need for an appropriate regulatory framework to ensure good governance, accountability, transparency and to ensure public funds are appropriately distributed.

The department has developed a discussion paper that I have endorsed. The department has also been in regular contact with the Australian Taxation Office regarding the matter. The paper is now in a consultation phase with the sector to ensure we have their feedback regarding implications for the options presented. This phase will be completed before the end of June.

**Palliative care: nurses**

**Raised with:** Health

**Raised by:** Ms Lovell

**Raised on:** 28 May 2008

**REPLY:**

It is outside Government policy to directly fund wage increases as a result of organisational negotiations with professional groups. However, in recognition that nurses make up between 45–85% of the community palliative care workforce, it is the intention of this government to increase the CPI for non-government (NGO) palliative care services from 2.9 per cent to 3.5 per cent from 1 July 2008. This will bring CPI in line with acute health services CPI and the remaining palliative care services auspiced by acute health services.

Eight NGO community palliative care services will benefit from this decision, increasing funding across these eight services by approximately \$100,000 annually. Goulburn Valley Hospice, as a NGO will directly benefit, increasing total annual indexation from \$13,919 in 2007/08 to \$16,799 in 2008/09.

In addition, the difference between 2.9 per cent and 3.5 per cent will be back-paid from 1 October to correspond with the new nurses' enterprise bargaining agreement. This will provide an additional \$73,000 across the eight NGO community palliative care services. Goulburn Valley Hospice will receive approximately \$3,000 from 1 October 2007–30 June 2008.

This government is committed to ensuring increasing demand for community palliative care is met. In the 2006/07 State budget an additional \$2 million recurrent was provided to community palliative care services. Goulburn Valley Hospice receives an additional \$20,000 recurrently from this funding.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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In the 2008/09 State budget, a new \$2 million recurrent funding was announced for community palliative care. Goulburn Valley Hospice will benefit from this funding again in 2008/09.

Victoria's Cancer Action Plan also recognises the importance of palliative care in caring for people whose cancers are incurable. The Cancer Action Plan provides funding to increase Nurse Practitioner positions in rural regions, improve training positions in palliative medicine and support packages of care for people with incurable cancer who wish to die at home.

